

AN EMIGRE LIFE

MARTA FEUCHTWANGER

VOLUME I













AN EMIGRE LIFE  
MUNICH, BERLIN, SANARY, PACIFIC PALISADES

Marta Feuchtwanger

Interviewed by Lawrence M. Weschler

VOLUME I

Completed under the auspices  
of the  
Oral History Program  
University of California  
**Los Angeles**

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## INTRODUCTION

Marta Feuchtwanger, who was eighty-four years old when these interviews began and eighty-seven when the volumes finally reached the shelf--eighty-seven, and perhaps more spry and vivacious than ever--was born on January 21, 1891, in Munich, Germany. Her life was subject to many migrations, none perhaps as definitive as the temporal: in her serene old age she resided on the far shore of another continent, on the nether cusp of another century. In these generous recollections, she has spanned them all.

Marta was the third child of Leopold and Johanna Reitlinger Loeffler, the only one to survive infancy. Although there was a stratum of banking in the family's prehistory, the passing years had compressed its standard of living; still, during Marta's childhood her father generated a steady income as a merchant with his own dry goods shop in town and a two-horse carriage for performing country rounds. At school, Marta proved an eager student with an intensely independent and inquisitive nature; meanwhile, from early escapades as a frisky tomboy, she gradually blossomed into an especially graceful athlete, securing many prizes at gymnastics competitions. Marta's family participated in the vast German-Jewish



movement toward reformism and assimilation: yet, Marta vividly recalls the ripples of anxiety caused by the Dreyfus affair to the west and the Kichinev pogroms to the east, and she herself was frequently embroiled in scuffles arising out of the casual anti-Semitism of her playmates.

Meanwhile, in another part of Munich, her future husband, Lion, was growing up in a very different environment. The Feuchtwangers were quite wealthy: they had made their fortune in margarine, and Lion's father still supervised the family factory. But Lion's history was perhaps shaped not as much by his family's wealth as by its Orthodoxy. Born on July 7, 1884, the first of the nine children of Sigmund and Johanna Feuchtwanger, Lion grew up in an environment at once deeply steeped in its Orthodox traditions and simultaneously straining to square those traditions with the practical requirements of life in a bustling provincial capital. Thus, for example, every Friday afternoon Lion's father "sold" his factory to his Gentile accountant, "buying" it back the next evening, thereby allowing production to continue uninterrupted while at the same time adhering to the injunction against work on the Sabbath. Likewise, young Lion was expected to succeed in two educations at once, the classical German matriculation during the day and the



Orthodox Jewish regimen in the predawn hours. As the eldest child, the glare of expectation was especially focused on Lion, and although this double education in fact formed Lion's sweeping intellectual horizons, it also robbed him of his childhood, his health, and eventually his spirit. By his late teens he had already spawned a stomach ulcer and abandoned his Orthodox faith. (The theme of Jewishness was nevertheless to remain a central concern recurring throughout the writings of his later years.) He rebelled, renounced his family wealth, and set out on his own.

The town in which these two young people were born, grew up, met, and matured, Munich at the end of the last century and during the first quarter of our own, was singularly graced with cultural and intellectual energy. Indeed, seldom in history has such a relatively small provincial town attracted such a variegated concentration of creative genius. This intense productivity is especially striking since it appears to have taken place in relative isolation from the native population--that is, the artists and writers formed a fairly self-sufficient community, drawing little on the conservative, largely Catholic population of the surrounding province. During the previous generation, Munich had served as a frequent homebase for Henrik Ibsen and August Strindberg, and





at the turn of the century their tradition was being continued in the work of Frank Wedekind. Summers saw the arrival of Max Reinhardt and his ensemble with their dazzling dramatic productions staged at one of the several flourishing theaters in town. In the popular Weinstube and Bierkeller, Karl Valentin was engendering the cabaret style. Munich was also the nurturing ground for Thomas and Heinrich Mann, for Bruno Frank as well as Lion Feuchtwanger, and in later years for Bertolt Brecht, flanked by Georg Kaiser and Ernst Toller. Erich Mühsam and Kurt Eisner propagated their blend of radical politics and creative integrity. On the musical front, Richard Strauss was launched in a town where, a generation later, Bruno Walter manned the chief podium. For its part, painting was revolutionized in Munich when Franz Marc and Wassily Kandinsky forged their Blaue Reiter movement. The Schwabing district, the Torggelstube café, the Simplicissimus journal, the Elf Scharfrichter cabaret . . . . During the early years of this century, Munich was Berlin in preparation. And indeed, with the upswelling of a virulent strain of anti-Semitic protofascism after the First World War--for, of course, Munich was also the town where Adolf Hitler was discovering himself in the early twenties--many of the cultural leaders in Munich scrambled for the safer high ground of Weimar Berlin.



To be sure, the vantage of hindsight accordions the series of cultural epiphanies which in fact transpired over decades: not all of these individuals, for example, dwelt in Munich at the same time. Nevertheless, the capital of Bavaria was undoubtedly redolent with the aura of cultural ferment during the years that Marta and Lion were growing up. By 1910, Marta was a lovely young woman, flitting about the edges of a cultural scene in which Lion had already become somewhat prominent as an upstart theater critic. And it was now, at a party given by one of Lion's sisters, that the two met.

Marta describes the snappy, sassy tone of their early encounters, Lion's persistent siege, her own persistent aloofness. But the chemistry of the relationship gradually took hold, and the two were soon pursuing "a secret courtship," secret encounters in Lion's attic apartment, secret for two years, that is, "until it was no longer possible to keep it a secret." Their engagement was suddenly announced to both sets of parents in 1912, and the wedding quickly dispatched on the shore of the Bodensee, a small affair with Marta gowned in black because of her "condition."

They embarked on a honeymoon which was to last years. Several months passed and they found themselves in Lausanne with Marta in labor: she gave birth to a daughter but



contracted puerperal fever during the delivery. The infant contracted the fever from her mother: the baby died, and the mother only barely survived. In the months thereafter the young couple recuperated on the French Riviera. Soon they embarked on a walking tour of Italy, living out of their knapsacks, Lion dispatching occasional articles in order to meet their meager expenses. Throughout 1913 and into 1914 they hiked down the Italian boot, crossed over to Sicily and then on over to North Africa, utterly oblivious in their primitive happiness to the gloom that was gradually gathering over Europe.

In August 1914, the young couple was sojourning in the desert of French Tunisia when they suddenly found themselves arrested as enemy aliens. Lion was incarcerated in a prisoner camp, and Marta, on the outside, worked frantically to wheedle his release. Miraculously, she succeeded, and the two quickly smuggled themselves onto a boat and escaped to Italy and then on back to Munich.

During the early stages of the war, Lion was in and out of military training, his stomach ulcer in a state of continual rebellion. He was constantly being pulled, at the last possible moment, out of squadrons marching off to precipitous annihilation. Eventually he was relegated to the back lines and put in charge of theater productions for the army. It was during this period that his own



cultural biases underwent the marked evolution from the purely aesthetical sympathies of his early years (l'art pour l'art) to the decidedly political concerns that were to characterize all of his subsequent production. And those politics, from very early on, were pacifist: he translated Aeschylus (The Persians) and Aristophanes (Peace); produced Gorky; wrote a play (Warren Hastings) which portrayed the despised English as complex human beings; and composed one of the first antiwar poems of that era ("Lied der Gefallenen" in 1915).

With the utter collapse of the war effort in 1918, Munich experienced a spontaneous revolution. The monarch fled and the socialists seized power. Led by Kurt Eisner, a former theater critic, they sought simultaneously to establish the socialist republic to which they aspired and to salvage the desperate economy which they had inherited. When Eisner was subsequently assassinated by a reactionary fanatic, the communist radicals rose up and proclaimed the Munich Soviet. But this last phase of the Räteregierung was short-lived: within months it was brutally suppressed by the military-dominated socialists in Berlin. Their "White Guards" entered the city and initiated a bloody purge of the Reds. Lion, who had been sympathetic to some of the aspirations of the Räteregierung and friendly with many of its leaders,





paid bitter homage with his play Thomas Wendt.

It was during these years just after the war that Lion, the occasional theater critic, was approached by a twenty-year-old medical student named Bertolt Brecht. The young man showed him the manuscripts of two plays. Lion immediately championed this precocious talent, arranged for performances, and even collaborated with him in writing a new play (Edward II). This was the dawn of a lifelong friendship and professional association. (Two later collaborations included Kalkutta 4. Mai in 1925 and Die Gesichte der Simone Machard in 1943.)

The early twenties in Munich were years of financial dislocation climaxing in a swirl of berserk inflation. They were also years of political instability, culminating in Adolf Hitler's abortive (premature) coup d'etat in 1923. The cultural community of Munich was quickly scattering, most of its members restationing themselves in Berlin. In 1925 the Feuchtwangers followed the trend.

During the early twenties, Lion moved from being a playwright who occasionally wrote criticism to becoming a novelist who occasionally wrote plays. In 1922 he completed Jud Süß, a novelized transformation of an earlier play. This historical novel, coupled with the next, Die hässliche Herzogin, catapulted Lion to the front of the world stage: his success, particularly



in Britain, was phenomenal. His next major work, Erfolg, treated contemporary events in Munich and indeed provided the first sustained satirical treatment of Adolf Hitler, a fact which the Nazis were not to forget. By 1930, Feuchtwanger had staked out his distinctive terrain as a writer: throughout the rest of his career he alternately treated historical subjects with an uncanny sense of lived realism, or contemporary situations with the distanced, objective tone of a future historian. His next major undertaking, perhaps his masterpiece, was Die jüdische Krieg, the first volume of the monumental Josephus trilogy which was to occupy him throughout the next decade.

Berlin was . . . Berlin. To sing its praises, to enumerate its titans, to approximate its ethos would seem at this point simultaneously redundant and reductionary. The Feuchtwangers situated themselves at its heart. Marta designed a superb house in the Grunewald district, and Lion gradually stocked it with a magnificent library, the first of three. Marta and Lion traveled widely--to Austria, Switzerland, France, Spain, England, Italy, Yugoslavia, even America . . . . They returned each time to a Berlin as vibrant as it was doomed.

In January 1933, while Lion was on tour in America and Marta out skiing in Austria, Hitler came to power.



They did not return: they left everything behind. Lion rushed to join Marta in Sankt Anton, and the two quickly retired to Bern. After a few months they moved south to the French Riviera, eventually settling in the sleepy fishing village of Sanary.

The Feuchtwangers were not the first literary people to discover Sanary--the region had been favored by the English, discovered by D.H. Lawrence years earlier and still savored by Aldous Huxley and his circle--but their presence seems to have magnetized the region. Within a year the coastal hills around Sanary were inhabited by the Thomas Manns, the Heinrich Manns, the Bruno Franks, the Ludwig Marcuses, Alma Mahler and Franz Werfel, and many others. Bertolt Brecht and Arnold Zweig were frequent visitors. For a period of seven years, this small corner of France constituted a brief refuge for the Weimar spirit.

Lion produced relentlessly. He turned his craft to the exposure of the Nazi menace in a series of passionate political allegories--Die Geschwister Oppermann, Exil, Der falsche Nero, Die Brüder Lautensack--interspersing these efforts with work on the continuing Josephus saga, which now took on an urgent tone of contemporary relevance. In 1937 he traveled to Russia, met Stalin, and returned to compose his controversial



report, Moskau 1937. He frequently traveled to Paris and was active in PEN (Poets, Essayists, and Novelists), trying to save writers and underscore the Nazi threat, a threat which all too quickly inundated the Feuchtwangers once again.

In 1940, with Franco-German relations deteriorating, the French government interned its Jewish exiles as potential enemy aliens. The Feuchtwangers, like all other Germans, were herded into camps. (Lion would now lose his second library.) They were separated, Lion sent to Les Milles and then San Nicolas (near Nîmes), Marta to Hyères and then the huge camp at Gurs in the foothills of the Pyrenees. In June, the Nazi armies swamped the French defenses, and Paris fell within a matter of days. Control of the camps devolved to the Nazis (through their Vichy puppets) and Feuchtwanger was among the select list whom they were specifically seeking. During a summer fraught with danger, Marta escaped from her camp, wandered through southern France, its roads swollen with disoriented and despairing refugees, and finally determined Lion's location. She secreted herself into his camp (disguised as a black marketeer), established contact, secreted herself back out, sought assistance from the American consulate in Marseilles (Roosevelt had ordered Feuchtwanger rescued at all costs), and with the aid of two young





consular officials, engineered Lion's kidnapping out of the camp. The Feuchtwangers then holed up in a Marseilles attic for several months before they were able to hazard their perilous escape, by foot over the Pyrenees, by train through fascist Spain, and finally in two separate ships out of Lisbon. They were reunited in October in New York, exhausted but safe. Lion quickly composed his Der Teufel in Frankreich as a memoir and a witness.

Within a year they had reestablished themselves, this time on the California Riviera; they caromed from one rented house to another until they finally secured a dilapidated castle in the hills of Pacific Palisades, the house at 520 Paseo Miramar. Marta quickly set about its rehabilitation. Once again they found themselves in a rich community of émigrés. The whole Sanary group had resurfaced on the west side of Los Angeles--the Manns, the Werfels, the Huxleys, the Franks--but now they were joined by others whose escapes had coursed elsewhere--Austrians, Germans, Russians, French; writers, musicians, artists, architects, filmmakers--Arnold Schoenberg, Fritz Lang, Jean Renoir, Max Reinhardt, Berthold and Salka Viertel, Christopher Isherwood, Bruno Walter, Igor Stravinsky, Ernst Toch, Wilhelm Dieterle, Peter Lorre, Greta Garbo, Erich Maria Remarque, Rudolf Carnap, Hans Reichenbach, Man Ray, Rico Lebrun, Arnold Döblin, Theodor



Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Richard Neutra, Otto Klemperer . . . .  
By 1941, even Brecht was here, although virtually ignored by the general public. Many found employment in local universities or in Hollywood: they found succor in one another's company. They spent evenings on the Palisade, watching the sun set over the Pacific, contemplating the ravages in the land they had left behind, awaiting the coming dawn. They worked as best they could. They were, as someone has called them, exiles in paradise.

Time passed. The war ended. Dawn came, but the eastern sky was bloody with revelations of death camps and bomb devastation. During the first years after the Nazi surrender, many of the émigrés expired, as much from exhaustion as anything else--Bruno Frank, Franz Werfel, Heinrich Mann, Arnold Schoenberg. The satisfactions of victory were further tempered by a pervading sense of anxiety as America lurched from its external war against fascism into an internal obsession with communism. The very broadcasts and papers with which these émigrés had cried out against Nazism from its earliest festering were suddenly being cited against them as evidence of longstanding "communist" sympathies. They were scored for their "premature antifascism." Within years these émigrés were transformed from heroic resisters into scheming subversives. The witchhunt focused on Hollywood



and, by implication, the émigré influence. Many of the émigrés found themselves forced into yet another exile-- Bert Brecht, Hanns Eisler, Thomas Mann. Many of those who remained, including Lion, were subject to official harassments: Lion, for example, was never granted American citizenship, despite repeated hearings. Lion's writings during these years explored the social psychology of earlier inquisitions, first in his play Wahn, Der Teufel in Boston (which anticipated, by several years, Arthur Miller's treatment of the same historical analog in his The Crucible) and later in his novel Goya. If the émigré community in Los Angeles had constituted a shadow of its Weimar greatness, by 1955 it had lapsed into a shadow of itself.

Despite the political pressures impinging all about him, Lion spent his last decades in a state of continual productivity. Generally, the work of these last years divides along two central concerns. On the one hand, Lion's historical imagination became riveted on the foundations of the modern era, the revolutions of the late eighteenth century: he composed novels based on the lives of Goya, Rousseau, Benjamin Franklin, a play on the last days of Marie Antoinette. Meanwhile, he also returned in his old age to his originary impulse, an evocation of the core essence of Jewishness, producing



two final novels, Die Jüdin von Toledo and Jefta und seine Tochter.

These works met with a tremendous popular reception: they were pressed into countless paperback editions, sold to the movies. Lion poured his large income into his lifelong bibliophilic obsession: he gradually built up his third library, perhaps his greatest, certainly one of the great private libraries in America, including rare editions of Spinoza, Voltaire, Rousseau, Goethe, a Nuremberg Chronicle, and hundreds of other treasures. (Years later, after Lion had died, this library too would be imperiled, this time by the famous Bel-Air fire of 1961, which surged to within yards of the house.)

During his last year, Lion was once again mobilizing his vast library, this time for a book-length essay on the history of and prospects for the historical novel. The manuscript would never be completed. The constricted organ of his unhappy childhood, his stomach, erupted once again in disease, this time a cancer; and within a fairly short time, on December 21, 1958, Lion Feuchtwanger was dead. He was seventy-four.

Of all of the extraordinary accomplishments of Lion Feuchtwanger's life, none perhaps supersedes the triumph of his forty-eight years with Marta Loeffler. The story of their marriage, in effect, constitutes his greatest





unwritten novel--not written, because it was lived. In the months following Lion's passing, Marta curled into a solitary seclusion: the only companions she allowed into her world were the animals she encountered on long hikes through the Santa Monica Mountains on during early morning swims in the Pacific.

Gradually, however, she was coaxed out of her isolation through the solicitude of friends, especially Ernst and Lilly Toch. Slowly her interest in the world recirculated. She busied herself with the stewardship of Lion's estate. She negotiated with the trustees of the University of Southern California, eventually donating the house and contents at Paseo Miramar to the university as a permanent subdivision of the USC Library, the Lion Feuchtwanger Memorial Library. She continued to live at the house, becoming the library's curator and guide, over the years shepherding thousands of visitors through its magnificent rooms. Her correspondence soon encompassed the entire literary world. She also became involved with local civic concerns: she spearheaded a campaign, for example, to save the Watts Towers. But more than anything else, she seemed to go through an apotheosis: with her long, black Chinese gowns, her sleek, white hair pulled back tight in a neat bun, her face a study in animation, she seemed to appear at every major cultural



event--concerts, theaters, films, art openings, consular and university receptions--the living embodiment of a noble tradition, a bridge with the past.

In short, she had become an institution. She just refused to behave like one. During the months of our interviews, she seemed as fresh and sassy as the young woman whose tale she was recounting. Occasionally we had to cut our sessions short because she had to drive off to yet another function: at age eighty-four she was chauffeuring friends a generation younger than she. She disarmed with her dry wit, endeared with her glowing charm, fascinated with her penetrating intellect. "The tragical and the comical"--she kept marvelling at their intertwining across her life. She might have added, the humane.

Lawrence Weschler

Los Angeles, California

January, 1978



## INTERVIEW HISTORY

INTERVIEWER: Lawrence Weschler, Assistant Editor, UCLA Oral History Program. BA, Philosophy and Cultural History, University of California, Santa Cruz.

### TIME AND SETTING OF THE INTERVIEWS:

Place: Mrs. Feuchtwanger's residence in the Lion Feuchtwanger Library, 520 Paseo Miramar, Pacific Palisades, in the modern German literature room.

Dates: June 17, 20, 24, 30; July 3, 7, 10, 14, 15, 17, 24, 25, 28, 30; August 1, 4, 5, 8, 11, 13, 15, 19, 22, 27, 29; September 1, 4, 9, 12, 17, 26, 30; October 3, 5, 1975.

Time of day, length of sessions, and total number of recording hours: The interviews generally took place in the mid-afternoon. Sessions averaged just over three hours each, although the actual taping time was seldom over two hours. Total recording time for the interviews was just under fifty hours.

Persons present during interview: Feuchtwanger and Weschler.

Video session: The session of August 13 (Tapes XIX-XX), which detailed the Feuchtwangers' escape from Nazi-occupied Europe in 1940, was videotaped. The session lasted two hours; the cameraman was Joel Gardner of the Program staff.

### CONDUCT OF THE INTERVIEW:

Mrs. Feuchtwanger, widow of the noted novelist Lion Feuchtwanger and herself a singularly important figure in the German émigré community in Southern California, had been a primary candidate for a UCLA oral history for several years already at the time that Lawrence Weschler of the Program staff approached her in June 1975, to contribute to a series of short interviews that he was conducting with friends of his grandparents, Ernst and Lilly Toch, to supplement the program interview of Lilly Toch. Mrs. Feuchtwanger, as a dear friend of the Tochs, was pleased to participate. Following this session with Mrs. Feuchtwanger on June 3, Program Director



Bernard Galm decided to extend this initial contact into a full-fledged oral history of Mrs. Feuchtwanger herself.

Mr. Weschler resumed the interviews with Mrs. Feuchtwanger on June 17. The two undertook a rigorous schedule of tapings, sometimes as many as three per week, and by October 15, after thirty-six sessions and just over fifty tape hours, the oral history was completed. As the interview proceeded, Mrs. Feuchtwanger prepared typed outlines of material she wished to cover, and, somewhat nervous about her fluency in English, she insisted on reviewing the outlines at the outset of each session before the tape recorder was turned on.

The interview followed a roughly chronological course with occasional thematic digressions or anticipations. Many sessions began with flashbacks to periods discussed earlier so as to supplement the record with newly recalled details. The oral history focused on Lion Feuchtwanger's work but placed perhaps even greater emphasis on his working environment. As such, portrayals of four distinct milieus were generated, each time as if from scratch: Munich, from the turn of the century through the Hitler putsch in 1923; Berlin, from the mid-twenties through Hitler's rise to power in 1933; Sanary-sur-mer, the Germany émigré colony on the French Riviera, from 1933 through Hitler's invasion of France in 1940; and Southern California after 1941. A few important friends--notably the Mann brothers and Bertolt Brecht--recur throughout the interview, as do such themes as Jewish assimilation and political persecution. The interview concludes with a survey of Mrs. Feuchtwanger's life and travels in the years since her husband's death in 1958.

Once the interviewing had begun, Mr. Galm sought independent funding to help in processing the mammoth transcript. Negotiations with the University of Southern California (the custodians of the Feuchtwanger Library) were brief and cordial, and by May 11, 1976, Harold Von Hofe, dean of the USC Graduate Division, and Mr. Galm agreed on a plan of evenly shared sponsorship of the oral history.





## EDITING:

Editing was performed by the interviewer, who checked the verbatim transcript for accuracy and edited it for punctuation, paragraphing, spelling, and verification of proper and place names. The final manuscript remains in the same order as the taped material. Words or phrases introduced by the editor have been bracketed.

Mrs. Feuchtwanger reviewed and approved the transcript. She supplied spellings of names that had not been verified previously. Although she made extensive small changes, these were primarily cosmetic rather than substantive and again reflected her concern over proper English usage. Outright deletions were rare.

The index was prepared by the interviewer, who also wrote the introduction. Front matter was assembled by the Program staff.

## SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

The original tape recordings and edited transcript of the interviews are in the University Archives and are available under the regulations governing the use of noncurrent records of the University. Copies of both the tapes and the edited transcript are on deposit in the Lion Feuchtwanger Library, a special division of the USC Library.

A file of supplementary materials compiled by the editor during the interview process (see Appendix B, p. 1747), including photographs, Mrs. Feuchtwanger's typewritten notes for the interview, and copies of articles about and by both her and her husband, is on deposit as Collection 100/155 in the Department of Special Collections of the UCLA Library.



TAPE NUMBER: I, SIDE ONE

JUNE 17, 1975

WESCHLER: Well, we've just been talking about how we should begin, Marta, and I guess the best way is for us to begin with you, to talk a little bit about when you were born, where you were born, and your family.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes. I was born in Munich, in Bavaria [on January 21, 1891]. Already my mother had been born there, and my grandparents lived there. My grandfather was a banker.

WESCHLER: On which side, on your mother's side?

FEUCHTWANGER: Mother's side, ja.

WESCHLER: What was the name of the family?

FEUCHTWANGER: Reitlinger. That's also very complicated, because it should be Feuchtwang. My grandfather was an adopted child, because his parents died. He was adopted by his aunt, but he had been born Feuchtwang. His family came from the same little village or little town [Feuchtwangen] from which my husband came, but they dropped their last syllable. So I always say I am my own comparative. [laughter] Anyway, my grandfather was a Reitlinger because his adopted parents--their name was Reitlinger. And he became a banker.

My grandmother from my mother's side [née Sulzbacher]



was from the north of Bavaria, from Franken, and they had a big farm there. I don't know much, but my mother said she wove linen and brought it every Friday to the market in the next big town, with a little carriage with a horse. There they were sitting on the floor or on the ground, and she had a big white crinoline on like in those days, and like a peasant, she also had a handkerchief on her head. She was--it was said she was very beautiful. My grandfather chanced to come by there, saw her, and fell in love with this little girl, who was more or less a peasant girl. And so they both went to Munich.

He was also from Franken, I think, somewhere. I don't remember where he was from. But they went to Munich, and he became a banker there. He was not a great banker, but anyway, they were wealthy people. It was a little bit like the Buddenbrooks; every generation was a little less wealthy because they were too much interested in studying--not in science, but in literature and law--and not very well in their trade. Anyway, he was a considerably wealthy man. Then came the war of 1870, the war between Germany and France. Most of his clientele were officers of the army, and they invited also his three lovely daughters for dancing, which was not usual--that Jewish girls were dancing with officers. But I think it was a little bit because they wanted to borrow some money from the banker to speculate.



Then came the war, and some didn't come back; some didn't have money, much money, and they just didn't pay their debts, when they had speculated with the money of my grandfather. My grandfather lost all his money. The lawyers told him to sue those officers, and then these three daughters--or anyway, so says my mother--fell on their knees and said, "Don't sue those nice officers." He was a very mild man, not very much out for money; so he didn't sue the officers, and he had to give up to be a banker. Soon afterwards he died. My grandmother, who was a very energetic girl--she was the girl who came from this farm--opened a shop for linen and ladies' underwear, and things like that, and this was rather well progressing. Then my mother met her future....

WESCHLER: Oh, wait, before you go on. First of all, what was the first name of your grandfather?

FEUCHTWANGER: I don't remember. I never met him, you know.

WESCHLER: Okay. When did he die?

FEUCHTWANGER: Soon after the end of the war, 1871, something like that.

WESCHLER: And he had three daughters. What were their names?

FEUCHTWANGER: Sedonie, and Ida. And my mother was the youngest one, Johanna, called Hannchen. And she was talented for making dresses. She always looked very elegant. I





remember when we made a walk, my mother and I, then those officers would come by, and they greeted like the officers greet, you know, were very friendly, and she always blushed like a young girl. It was the things which happened in her youth. Also the mother was energetic, and she did rather well with this shop. But she wanted to marry the three daughters, so first the oldest one got a dowry and married a cousin of my father. So my father came to the wedding, from Augsburg, a little village near Augsburg. He met my mother and he fell in love.

WESCHLER: We might leave them there falling in love, and find out a little bit about his family.

FEUCHTWANGER: His family was in--it was a little, little village near Augsburg, the very old city where Brecht was born. It was Hürben-bei-Krumbach-bei-Augsburg, so little that it was not on the map. There his father was a cattle dealer, but he looked, according to the photos I have seen (we lost everything there, all of the daguerreotypes)--he looked very aristocratic, and he must have been a very good man. He was not very rich, but he was wealthy. He died early. There were two sons, I think. The one was a cigar merchant, and my father was his apprentice.

WESCHLER: Now, what was your father's name?

FEUCHTWANGER: Leopold. Leopold Loeffler. My grandfather from my father's side--his firm was together with another



man with the name of [Hermann] Landauer. This Landauer married my aunt, and my father came to the wedding and met my mother. And they two--Loeffler and Landauer (it was an old name, you know, this firm, already from Augsburg here)--they took over the shop of my grandmother, and it was the firm of Loeffler and Landauer. It was kind of a little department shop, but not only for ladies.

WESCHLER: In Munich.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja. In Munich. Not a house--it was only a shop--but in an old palace, also in a very good site. They did all right, but not much. My father then began to go traveling and sold much more merchandise in traveling than he sold [earlier], not any more in a small way, but in a bigger way. Mostly he sold before the First World War to the little shops in the country. He always had a carriage and two horses and a coach. The whole year, all through snow and ice and rain, he went outside to the country and sold his merchandise to the little merchants there. He made more money than he made in town because he sold it wholesale, you see. Also he always found more merchandise in the countryside which was also woven by--he bought the merchandise from the one who wove it and then sold it to others in another little town, or so. My uncle, his associate, was not very--he was not very efficient. He always stood under the door and looked out. [laughter]



WESCHLER: Mr. Landauer.

FEUCHTWANGER: Mr. Landauer. Ja, ja. And they stayed little people in comparison. But my father then became more wealthy, because my uncle retired very soon, and also died very soon, because he was just sitting at home and doing nothing and that is not very healthy. My father was then more enterprising and became rather wealthy. Not very wealthy, not as wealthy as my husband's parents were. But still, I was an only child, and I could have elegant dresses, and we were making trips a lot to other families.

WESCHLER: Do you have any idea what year your parents were married in?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, I....

WESCHLER: How long before you were born?

FEUCHTWANGER: I was the third child. The two first children died, and I was born in 1891. My parents were already not very young anymore. They could have been my grandparents. And this was very unfortunate for me, so I was very lonely. I had no young parents, you know.

WESCHLER: You had two siblings that died in infancy?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes. One child died right after birth. My mother never wanted a dog anymore because my uncle, her brother, was a high official in the government as a lawyer. What would you call it? A high judge, a superior judge, or something. And he imitated all those students



in those times, with long pipes which went from the mouth to the ground, and a big dog, a Great Dane. [Otto von] Bismarck is always painted with his long pipe and this dog--and he did the same. He also had a kind of hat with colors, you know; he imitated all those things. Later he was in a small town--he was a superior judge--and he came to visit my mother. And my mother, when she was pregnant, fell over the dog. That, she said, was the reason that the child died. And she never wanted any animal anymore, in the house, which I missed very much. My father liked animals, but she didn't want animals in the house.

The second child: there was an epidemic of typhoid fever in those times, when she was small. She recovered, but she was a little retarded. She had special lessons at home; she was not sent to school because she couldn't follow the other children. I was sitting on the floor when she was with the teacher, and I heard her at play with my building blocks. I heard everything that my older sister learned, and I picked it up so I could read and write, along with a little arithmetic, what you need as a little child. So I was sent at six years into the second grade already.

WESCHLER: Your sister was still alive, how long then?

FEUCHTWANGER: My sister died then. From meningitis.

WESCHLER: How much older than you was she?





FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, at least four years older than I.

WESCHLER: And she died at what age?

FEUCHTWANGER: I was about three or four years old, and she was about ten years old, or nine. I don't remember anymore. She was a beautiful girl with blue eyes and blonde hair and [was] very good-natured. And I was terrible, vivacious like two boys; I was not a very good sister for her. You know, she was nicer than I was. I did terrible things with her, because I was longing for tenderness. My parents were very strict. They had no tenderness at home, and they thought it's the same for their children. I'm sure they loved us, but I never heard a good word from them. I always wanted to be praised, to be popular with my parents. So my sister, who was very good-natured and never would have hit me, I accused her to my mother, that she pushed me. My mother wanted to spank her. And I threw myself between the two and said, "Oh, no, don't do it to poor Ida. It didn't hurt so much." And the whole thing was lies. She didn't push me; I just wanted to be praised, that I did this generous thing, took her part, and that she would tell my father what I did. But my mother later on must have found out. She always found out what I did, all those things-- I never would know how. Then once I asked her, "But how do you know that?" And she said, "The little bird told me." We had a canary bird, that was the only animal; so I was



kneeling before the canary bird every time I did some mischievous thing, and said, "Please don't tell Mama."

WESCHLER: Was your mother more the disciplinarian than your father?

FEUCHTWANGER: My father wasn't at home much. When he came it was always a great event--he always brought something from his trips--but he was tired, and I didn't have much from my father. Only on Sunday, I could go into his bed, and then he read the newspaper.

WESCHLER: He was gone for how long at a time?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, not long.

WESCHLER: A week?

FEUCHTWANGER: He was back every weekend, because he only traveled with horses, and in the neighborhood, in Bavaria--not farther than Bavaria.

WESCHLER: Did your mother become cynical, having lost two children in infancy?

FEUCHTWANGER: She was very depressed. It was also the reason why I had no childhood. She was terribly depressed after she lost her first child, and then the second child; she almost felt guilty also. But it was never her fault. They did everything what they could. She had the best doctors, but it was the meningitis, the doctors said--what probably is not true--from the typhoid fever. But it just came like that. Nobody lived in a healthy way. In summer we



were in the countryside, but the whole year besides this, we were always in an apartment and not going out much.

Also we didn't eat so very healthy things, mostly wrong-cooked fat things. Like people do in the cities.

WESCHLER: What part of Munich did you live in?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, that was very interesting. We lived in the middle of the old town, near the famous Frauenkirche--the Cathedral of Our Lady, it would be translated. My mother was very good friends with an old teacher, a female teacher. This teacher lived in this house, and my mother wanted to live on the same story as her teacher. It was an old friendship, but the teacher was double the age of my mother, a very old lady, with a sister. A [second] sister of this [teacher] was a court lady, from the queen at the court. She was very proud and always came with an equipage with horses. She brought beautiful things to her sisters, because the queen, the queen mother, was the mother of the mad king, Ludwig II.... Ludwig II, you know, Richard Wagner's king. This was the mother of Ludwig II. My mother lived through all those things with the death of Ludwig II; she told me always that she had also a piece of the bench where he was sitting before he drowned, things like that. This court lady brought many things which the king bought for his mother, beautiful Meissen porcelain, and silver things. I inherited many of those things, but it was all lost with Hitler. Very beautiful antique Meissen



which later you couldn't find anymore.

WESCHLER: I'd be interested in a brief digression here.

The mad king was not still alive when you were a child?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, he was already drowned. Ja, ja. And his brother came, who was even madder. Otto was his name. He was also immediately confined, and he was even worse. Ludwig was still in his senses, in a way.

WESCHLER: We might talk just a little bit about the sense of government in Munich, having these two mad kings.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja. The second mad king, Otto, was replaced by his uncle, who was called the Prinzregent, "prince regent." I knew him personally, because I knew him when I was at the gymnastic club for children. I was twelve years old, but I think we should come back, because it is farther.

WESCHLER: Okay, we'll come back to that later. I was just asking you where you grew up, and you might just describe it.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja. We grew up in this old house, which was near the foot of the big church, the famous church of My Lady. This church has two cupolas instead of spires. Maybe you have seen pictures. This was because when they built it--it was old Gothic, from the early Gothic times--they ran out of money, and they couldn't put the spires on. Then the rain came in, so they put those cupolas. No other church in the whole world has those cupolas. That is a





sign of the city of Munich, and it was only because they never had enough money to finish the church. It was very windy, I remember. It's always--Rainer Maria Rilke writes about Chartres, about the cathedral there, about the terrible wind which goes around the cathedral. I could never find out why. Of course, it was always in a little higher place; might it be these high buildings that brought out the wind? Anyway, my mother was small, and I remember we were shopping, we were going home, and the wind was so heavy that my mother went up in the air. Ja. They had big dresses, wide, wired skirts, and the wind.... [laughter] I was a child, but I could hold her; I really could. I was very strong because I was so mischievous. I always fought with boys and did everything what--for instance, I had nothing to make gymnastic on, so I climbed up on the doors; I would sit up on top of the doors and swing. It wasn't very good for the doors. But I was very strong, because I could get myself up on the doors, which is not so easy.

WESCHLER: What did your house look like?

FEUCHTWANGER: The house was just a building, a four-stories building.

WESCHLER: How many rooms did you have?

FEUCHTWANGER: First we had four rooms. Then we took a room of the other one. When the old ladies, the teachers,



died, we took one of their rooms and broke through. That was then my room. There was a bedroom, a dining room, and a salon, which was called the drawing room. I think there was more. Five, five....

WESCHLER: It was very spacious, since you were the only child.

FEUCHTWANGER: It was--ja, ja. But it was dark, and there were the narrow streets. I remember across the street there were very old buildings, even older than our house, and also lower. As long as those buildings were there, we had more room, more sun, more light. But then a bank, a big bank, which was on the end of the street.... It was a very short street, maybe six houses or so, and on the other end of the street from where the shop of my parents was, there was a big bank, the Handelsbank. And this bank wanted to add another building; they wanted to expand, so they bought all those little houses and just--what would you say? Finally it was a big building instead of the corner building. And I saw this building going up. It was built in red sandstone. When there was a big scaffolding, there were two young men; and they were Italians, because they always had the sculptors [come] from Italy. It was near; it was not far, Italy, and most of the houses were built by Italians. There were two young men, one blond and one dark. I was always standing at the window, looking how they made those ornaments out of designs, and I



couldn't decide--it was terrible--which one I liked more.

It was a great.... [laughter]

WESCHLER: How old were you at this time?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, about ten years old. But it was a great tragedy. I just couldn't decide which one I liked better.

WESCHLER: Did they know they were being looked at?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, I don't think so. Yes, sometimes, when I looked out more, then they greeted me from the other side. But these were warm Italians, so they would not wait. [laughter]

WESCHLER: Before we get into talking a little bit about your schooling, I thought you might talk a bit about the nature of Judaism in your household. Was your family Orthodox Jewish, or...?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, my family were Reformed, but we had a kosher house; rather, the cooking was kosher. My mother cooked, and we had a maid, and a gouvernante for me.

WESCHLER: Had their parents been more Orthodox, or were they also Reformed?

FEUCHTWANGER: They were also--but it was not Reformed, you know; it was just a state of mind, more or less. My grandfather who was the banker was a very mild and tolerant man. He always said to his wife, my grandmother, when she was busy with her four children and cooking and all that, "You don't have to go to the temple. When you work at the house, it's like working for God, too." Things like that, you know.



He was enlightened. Also, I think he read Spinoza. But my mother was not bookish, and also her sisters not. Maybe my uncle was, because he studied.

WESCHLER: So, in other words, there wasn't a conflict in your family, as there was going to be in Lion's family?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, there was no conflict. No. But my father, who wanted to have a very strict kosher household, when he went on his trips, he always ate what he wanted. But he always said he didn't like pork. It was not allowed for Jews; it was more-- I think it was for hygiene. They found out that it's not healthy when there are those microbes, trichinas.

WESCHLER: How would you characterize, then, your own early commitment to Judaism? It wasn't a major part of your life?

FEUCHTWANGER: I learned Hebrew, but not grammatically. It was for me a great ordeal to learn it, because I liked to understand what I learned, and I didn't understand what I had to learn. I just had a prayer book, and on one side it was German, and the other side it was Hebrew. The words didn't go together. I had to learn the lessons at school. I had to learn what I read. But it was only the whole phrase which I could learn, and not the words. The words didn't go together. It was for me a great ordeal. I remember every Sunday evening I had to learn for the next morning, for my religious lesson. I always had very good grades, but it was not interesting for me. I liked to be interested in what I learned.

WESCHLER: Were most of your friends Jewish?





FEUCHTWANGER: No.

WESCHLER: Was there any problem about that?

FEUCHTWANGER: There were very few Jews anyway in Munich. There was not....

WESCHLER: Later on, Munich will really be one of the foundations for the Nazis, and there will be a great deal of anti-Semitism there, I gather. Was this already the case?

FEUCHTWANGER: No. It was not so much. No, not much in Munich. There was more a religious fanaticism. It was a very Catholic town, you know. I remember that there was one little newspaper which was anti-Semitic, and it was from a priest. They hated the Jews because "they killed our Lord." That's what the children also had to learn. But it had nothing to do with the later anti-Semitism, the Rassenhass. It was only religious.

WESCHLER: But was it widespread? Did you feel it as a child?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, all Bavaria was like that. I felt it in a way, because when I was at school, I was a good student, and one of my teachers liked me very much because I always knew my lessons. Then came a girl from a very, very rich family. They came from Stuttgart, another town, and she came every day in an equipage and two horses. She was baptized. She was Jewish, a very beautiful girl, and baptized. From this moment, I was just dirt for this teacher--it was a woman teacher--because she was very



religious, also. Before, I was her favorite student; now she didn't look at me. I was very unhappy about that.

WESCHLER: Were there many Jews who were converting at that time?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, not many. I didn't know many. I didn't know at all, I would say. Only this girl, I think, and her family.

WESCHLER: Outside of that incident, were there other incidents where you felt anti-Semitic things?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, when we were on vacation, in spas or resorts, then we always went to the Jewish restaurant, the kosher restaurant. Then the children around where we lived, where we rented an apartment or a little house or so, saw us going inside this restaurant. So once the children--those kind of peasant children, you know, from the little towns--called me "dirty Jew," and I said, "Dirty Christ." [laughter] That was all, and then I said, "Well, do you want to fight?" And then I fought, and I usually was kneeling on their breast, so they didn't say it anymore. [laughter] Even when they were bigger boys, I was fanatic, you know; when they said those things like that, I was stronger than I really was.

WESCHLER: But would you say that your main identification with Jewishness was....



FEUCHTWANGER: It was not at all. Outside of [the fact] that I had to go to the temple every Saturday, there was nothing Jewishness.

WESCHLER: So mainly when people accused you of being a Jew, it came out.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja. No, and my father always, he liked to sing. He didn't sing right, you know, but loud. And so when this Pesach--how do you call it?

WESCHLER: Passover.

FEUCHTWANGER: Passover, yes. He sang the whole two days, or whatever it was, and very loud. My mother was always very self-conscious that the neighbors would hear this, mostly when we opened the door when he'd say, "The Messiah is welcome." You opened the door, and the whole neighborhood heard everything. My mother didn't even want that the servants would know. It was always a tendency not to let people know that we were Jewish. I remember with my uncle at the restaurant where we always met on Sunday to eat out, he didn't eat kosher, but we always ate eggs or fish. So somebody, another man, another cousin of my uncle, was telling something Jewish, and then my uncle said, "I don't like those synagogal expressions." He turned around so that nobody would hear it. It was really more denying to be Jews than to be conscious of Jewishness.

WESCHLER: I've read that in Vienna there were a great deal



of Hasidic Jews, Polish Jews coming in, but that that was very....

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja. Yes, we didn't know those people.

WESCHLER: Those were not in Munich?

FEUCHTWANGER: Not at all. Later on, I have to tell you, later on, when I was about twelve years old, there was a terrible pogrom in Russia. It was in Kishinev, and I remember in the synagogue, in the temple, the cantor sang, improvised to an old melody, about this Kishinev. I always heard the repeating "Kishinev." That was a big impression, just when the Jews were killed there. It was always when there was a famine in Russia, when it was not a good year for grain, then they asked or encouraged the people to rob the Jews and kill them. To have a--what is it called?--a scapegoat?

WESCHLER: A scapegoat.

FEUCHTWANGER: So, many fled to Germany from there, and part of them also came to Munich. My uncle, who was a cousin of my father, was a leader of the commune, I think you would call it--the Parnas: it was a Hebrew word. He was a rather rich man, and retired. He was also a banker, and he said, "We don't want those dirty Jews here. We will give them money and send them away." I was about ten or twelve years old, and I said, "But how could they not be dirty, when they are fleeing the country with only what





they had on their body--nothing, no other things to change?" And then this uncle looked angrily at me, but he didn't say anything. He usually sent the Jews on to Holland, and they came later to America. Mostly from Munich they sent them to Holland--gave them money and sent them away. When I came home, I had to stand in the corner, because I was fresh against this uncle, who was the leader of the commune. That's why I remember it very well. But it wasn't because I was Jewish: it was just I thought it was unjust, you know, to people who were fleeing. So I spoke out.

WESCHLER: Well, that is going to become an ongoing theme of this story.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja. But later on, I was about fifteen years old, and there was a social club where my parents were members. It was already kind of arriving at a higher position. I was dancing there, and I met a young student from the East--what's now East Germany. They were very conscious of being Jews. They came all more from the East. He told me about Jewish things. It was the first time I heard that I do not have to be ashamed to be a Jew or so, I should be proud, and things like that. So it made me wonder.

WESCHLER: How did you respond? Did you start becoming more interested then?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, I was more interested then. But I was



never proud. I always said, "Why should I be proud to be Jewish? The others shouldn't be proud to be Christian." You see. "We are what we are," I said. "That's no reason to be proud of it. Just not to be ashamed." So I hated everything what smelled of chauvinism already as a child. I didn't want to be better than others. I just [wanted] the same. Equal.

WESCHLER: Well, we might go back now a little bit to your education.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja. Because my two sisters died, my parents wanted to be overcautious and didn't send me to a public grammar school, which were usually very good, but to a private school, where the accent was on French. I never learned good German grammar. I don't know it now either. I just write like I hear it. It was, of course, small, only with very rich and aristocratic students. And I caught every sickness which you could imagine. My parents didn't send me to the public school, so I wouldn't have-- but not only that, I got the scarlet fever, and the measles, and others, and in a very dangerous way. I almost died every time. Once I had pneumonia, and in those days there were not antibiotics. Another time, my kidneys were affected. So every time I was near death, and my parents only wanted to do their best. But I recovered always, because I was strong from my mischievousness.



WESCHLER: Were either of their families sickly?

FEUCHTWANGER: No. My father was never sick, and he never had a cold, although it's a very cold country. He only died, I think it was a kind of stroke, when he was-- but they were not old, my parents. About seventy. My genetics are not very good, because my parents died before they were seventy.

WESCHLER: But you've done well. [laughter] So you went to this school. What was the name of this school, do you remember?

FEUCHTWANGER: Siebert Institute. Siebert was the old lady who owned it. She was very elegant; she always had a big train when she came to the class, and everybody was afraid of her. Once she saw me before the shop of my parents eating an apple. She spoke to me and said, "Aren't you ashamed to be a student of my institute and eating an apple on the street?" She was just furious. The next day she punished me. I don't remember what she did, but I think I got something on my hands, you know. In those days they were still with the--with the...

WESCHLER: Rods and sticks.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja.

WESCHLER: Corporal punishment.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja.

WESCHLER: What's wrong with eating an apple on the street?



FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, you don't do that. You just don't do that when you are in aristocratic institutes. But there were also other things, for instance, that no man would ever have carried a little package on the street. Always the women had to carry the package. The men went sometimes with their wives to buy things but never would stoop so low as to carry something for a woman.

WESCHLER: So how old were you at this institute? For how long?

FEUCHTWANGER: I was there until I was fifteen. The other girls were seventeen, but I was two years younger because I came right away into the second class.

WESCHLER: What were your major interests at that school?

FEUCHTWANGER: Everything, I think. I liked to learn. And I was very lonely, because all the other girls were much older. I didn't understand what they were talking about. When I came to school, I didn't know that you had to sit down and stay there in your bench; so I went running around the classroom, bringing the teacher an apple or a flower or so, and the teacher slapped me in the face because I wasn't sitting down. That was my early experience at school--we just didn't understand each other.

WESCHLER: Were you a disciplinary problem generally, or did you quickly learn to sit in your place?

FEUCHTWANGER: I learned it quickly. I didn't have to be slapped. And then the other children always had some





secrets before me. When they began menstruating, they didn't tell me what it was. They always whispered when I was in the neighborhood. When I asked, "What are you speaking about?" they said, "Oh, you are too small; you don't understand it." They did it just to anger me; I was so much stronger and also was a better student than most of them, and they wanted to have something special which I wouldn't understand. And also the dirty things which children learn, you know, mostly from the servants--so I knew everything before my parents knew that I knew.

WESCHLER: Through the servants or through your schoolmates?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes. No, the servants told it to the children. And one of the children, who was the most stupid one, she told me. The others didn't tell me.

WESCHLER: So that was your education?

FEUCHTWANGER: On a dark staircase, you know, very dark, we sat in a corner and she told me everything. But I didn't understand it very well, and it escaped also my mind because I was thinking my parents were right, what they'd told me. They told me, of course, that the stork always brings the children. So I thought it was just to make fun out of me. I remember when we were on vacation, there came a woman who always brought berries. My mother bought berries from her. She said that she's so glad that my mother bought from her, because she has so many children



and she's poor. My mother said, "And now you're expecting another child." I looked at how my mother could know that, and I saw that this woman has a very big belly; so afterwards I said, "Is it true that children are in the belly?" She said, "Well, how could you think a thing like that?" I said, "But this woman was here, and you said, 'And now you are expecting another,' and she had such a big belly, so I thought she had a child in her belly." "Oh, no," she said, "it's not true." So I believed my mother, of course.

WESCHLER: Did you ever have any confidential talk with your parents, or was it just not done? After a while, did you eventually have talks about "the facts of life" with your parents?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, my mother only told me that I shouldn't be worried if something happened like that, you know, something on my trousers. That was all what she told me.

WESCHLER: And would you say that was fairly common at that time in Munich?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes. Absolutely. And not only in Munich-- everywhere. The children learned it only from the servants. And mostly not in a very elegant way. I remember also that once on a Sunday, when my parents came home, and I was with the maid, I heard terrible shouting. I was sleeping, and I heard terrible shouting, and I said, "What's that?"



My mother said that there was a soldier in the room of the maid; they sent the maid away, and the soldier away, and.... [laughter]

WESCHLER: But you had no idea what was going on?

FEUCHTWANGER: No idea, no. I said, "Why not?"



TAPE NUMBER: I, SIDE TWO

JUNE 17, 1975

WESCHLER: We're just talking about what life was like in Munich at the turn of the century.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja. On Christmas we had a little Christmas tree for the maid, and also the maid always got something for her dowry, mostly linen and a ten-mark gold piece, which was about what is now a ten-dollar piece. And she had it in her drawer. I always went to the girl's room because I was so lonely, and she was the only younger person I could speak with. I saw this piece, I took it away, and I put it in my drawer. So after a while, the girl didn't find her gold piece anymore, and she asked my mother what she thinks about it. Then my mother found it in my drawer. It wasn't very pleasant what happened afterwards.

WESCHLER: What did happen?

FEUCHTWANGER: I was spanked. [laughter] I just liked [the gold piece]; I didn't know that it was of any value. I just liked the look of it.

WESCHLER: Did you have many friends?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, not at all. I had no friends, because my parents were always afraid I could get some sickness or catch some cold from other children. My aunt--that's the





sister of my mother--also had a daughter. She was at school, and one of the children complained that she had trouble with swallowing. Her daughter looked into the girl's mouth to see what she had there, and she caught the sickness and died. It was Diphtherie. So my parents always didn't like me to play with other children. That's why I was so lonely at home when my sister died. I had only the maid, and they were mostly peasant girls who were all from very pious families, peasants. And [their parents] always implored my mother not to let them go out, or dancing, or so--and then they had the soldiers in their room! And I always took the side of the maid. Always. Also when I was older. That was the most [usual reason] when we were quarreling, my parents and I. They couldn't understand that you can take the side of a maid who was a proletarian and very much lower than we were.

WESCHLER: Would they have defined themselves as bourgeois?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes.

WESCHLER: They would call themselves "bourgeois"?

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja.

WESCHLER: What was the cultural life like in Munich, and to what extent did you participate in it?

FEUCHTWANGER: I didn't participate in any cultural life; I wouldn't know. When I left school, I wanted to study



medicine. That was my interest because many of my cousins were doctors.

One of those doctors, by the way, probably saved my life. When I was so terribly sick, [because of] one of these children--I think it was scarlet fever or so--he came from Switzerland, where he studied, and he brought some medicine from there. Switzerland was very great in medical science. My doctor, who was a children's doctor, said that this cousin of mine was a genius. He had never seen such a talented man. He said also--he admitted that he saved my life.

WESCHLER: Do you remember his name?

FEUCHTWANGER: The doctor or the cousin?

WESCHLER: The cousin.

FEUCHTWANGER: The cousin: Oberndorfer. He was later Professor Siegfried Oberndorfer and was the head of the anatomy at the university and also at one of the city hospitals.

WESCHLER: You say you wanted to go into medicine. Were you just being a tomboy, or was there a realistic possibility for a woman to become a doctor at that time?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes. I didn't know any [woman] doctor, but I wanted to--I didn't care about that. In those days, the children and the boys were separated at school. But in my class was a girl who was a daughter of a dentist,



and she studied. She wanted also to be a dentist, and so she went into.... Now then, for the first time, there was a girl's gymnasium, you know--high school; it was opened the first time. She went there and studied and became a dentist. But until then, she had to go with boys. And it was also not very well liked, you know, that the girl would go to a high school with boys.

WESCHLER: Was there a likelihood that a woman setting up a practice as a doctor or a dentist would succeed?

FEUCHTWANGER: She was a dentist later; she was my dentist later.

WESCHLER: And she had a good practice?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, very good, ja. She took over the practice of her father.

WESCHLER: How was that looked upon?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, she was very exceptional. I know that Mrs. Thomas Mann, who was older than I, said she wanted to study, but her parents were very rich. Her father [Alfred Pringsheim] was a famous mathematics professor, from a very rich industrial family, so she had private lessons from tutors. But she made her examinations in the same college where my husband made them; it was about the same time. But she didn't continue studying. She married. So I didn't know anybody who was studying in those days.



WESCHLER: Did your mother and father support you in your decision to go to medical studies?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, they didn't allow me, because they didn't want me to study with boys or to go to the university. I was not allowed to study. So I was allowed to take some private lessons in French and English. There was also a kind of--what you would call "extension" here, but it was in daytime, where you could hear lectures. I went to lectures on literature and philosophy. I did not understand anything of philosophy, but literature interested me most.

There was another thing which prepared me for that. When I was so terrible sick, the sister of this Dr. Oberndorfer (who was then only a student, a young doctor) was a cripple. She almost couldn't walk. Maybe she had poliomyelitis in her childhood--nobody knows. She was like a dwarf and couldn't walk very well. But she was very well read. In her family she wasn't liked, because she looked like that. She was in the kitchen, always cooking, and whenever she could, she read. When I was sick she came a long way--she had to walk because there was no other way there--to see me every day, and spoke with me and told me all the fairy tales, all the Greek mythology. All that I learned from her. I had no books--I never had books to read. There were some books in a closet that my father





didn't allow me to read. When I found the key to the closet and read the books (that was also one of the things where the little bird always found out) I found out those terrible books were Goethe and Schiller. But to read, you know, Faust, where this girl got pregnant--that I was just not allowed to read. So I never had books to read. But this cousin came, and....

WESCHLER: Her name was?

FEUCHTWANGER: Anna Oberndorfer. She always came when I was sick. I also hated to drink milk. I never wanted milk, and when she was there, I drank the milk just so that she would tell me the stories. This was the only way I had any contact with culture: from her. She awakened my interest in literature. When I came to school, or when I learned something, I always had to write in the examination, "I was sick," because I was sometimes for months not at school. When I said, "I don't know about those questions," then I had to write on the question, "I was sick." But when that was mythology, or history, or something like that, I always knew everything, but just because of the tales of my cousin. She was a cousin of my mother.

WESCHLER: Your parents had books in the house. Did they read them, or did they just have them in the house?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, no, they just had them in the house. It was not many--a very few books.



WESCHLER: Both of them could read, of course?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, of course. In those days, already, everybody learned to read.

WESCHLER: Could their parents read?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, yes. Everybody read in Germany. It was a very literate country. I wouldn't know anybody who couldn't read. Even the maids, which came from the countryside, they all read. You know there were so many monasteries and Catholic schools where the nuns and priests taught; so even in the countryside, all the children learned how to read and write. Somebody told me once that people made a cross instead of writing their name, but this was not the use--not in Germany.

WESCHLER: In retrospect, what you now know about the cultural life of Munich, was it--certainly, for instance, Vienna was extremely exciting. Was Munich also, or not much?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, but it was.... No, not at all. But there was a very good opera, and also a good royal theatre, and an operetta, a musical theater. Musicals like [Jacques] Offenbach were played there.

WESCHLER: One always associates Wagner, of course, with the Mad King Ludwig.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes. It was a fantastic opera, there.

WESCHLER: Mainly Wagner, or also others?



FEUCHTWANGER: Also others. Germany was a country of operas. There were many opera theaters there, and they played also French operas--[Georges] Bizet, and Carmen, and later [Giacomo] Puccini.

WESCHLER: Did you attend any of these?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, my parents rented a box. And I regularly went to the theater; that was also a kind of social life. The only daughter had to do that. So I saw the great plays, mostly classic plays, at the opera house, which also was the [house for] the royal theater. Not only opera. I saw all the Wagner operas; I saw also the first performance of Richard Strauss's Salomé and Der Rosenkavalier.

WESCHLER: The first performances?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, it was a little later. But I was not married yet. They fell through, in Munich, you know.

WESCHLER: Let's go ahead a little bit and tell that story.

FEUCHTWANGER: I think we should go back before because there is one episode I wanted to tell you. It was in the nineties at the time of the [Alfred] Dreyfus trial.

WESCHLER: Right.

FEUCHTWANGER: This was a great event, you know. Everybody spoke about it. You wouldn't believe it--the whole conversation, wherever you went, was about that. Our



maid had--they called it Hintertreppen--side stairways, you know, rear stairways. There came always those dealers who brought forbidden lectures, things to read, you know. It was just small magazines that looked like that.

WESCHLER: What we would call the underground press?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, it wasn't underground. It was only for the maid, usually. Kitsch ["trash"].

WESCHLER: I see.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, it was a little bit--there were illustrations where the women are a little more décolleté than usual. And there I read also the entire affair of Dreyfus. Of course, there were many lies that they invented for sensation. It also said his wife became mad and wanted to throw herself out of the window, which wasn't true. You see that it really occupied everybody, also the "huckster" literature.

WESCHLER: What was the general response?

FEUCHTWANGER: The general response was that nobody believed that he was guilty, even when he was condemned. Also then there was also another thing. Bernhard von Bülow was then the prime minister of Germany, and of course with one word he could have saved him, because what Dreyfus was condemned for was that he spied for Germany. Only after [Emile] Zola wrote his "J'accuse" in the newspaper (a copy of which I have upstairs, you remember) was there





then a new trial. Everybody spoke about the Devil's Island where he lived. It must have been terrible to live there, but it was not even exaggerated, how terrible it was there. So we were all--the whole fantasy was filled with these tales of Dreyfus. And then when they found out that another man with the name of [Marie Charles] Esterhazy was the spy, the German government never told a word about it. Of course, it is not the rule that you betray a spy, but still it was--nobody could understand it.

WESCHLER: Was it mainly the Jews who were outraged, or were the Catholics also outraged?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, I think everybody was outraged. It wasn't so much that he was Jewish, in Germany, but that he was just an officer who was condemned for treason, and then he was innocent. But he always said he was innocent. He never really understood what happened to him. He was a very mediocre man. But he was innocent. He was, I think, too mediocre to be a spy. [laughter]

WESCHLER: How long did that affair go on?

FEUCHTWANGER: I don't know. I think that this "J'accuse" was in 1898. I was seven years old. I remember that.

WESCHLER: So you grew up with this being one of the major things on the political horizon.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja. In our family, of course, they spoke about his Jewishness, but it was not in the newspapers



or so.

WESCHLER: What did your father, for instance, or your mother, say about his Jewishness?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, nothing else. They felt uneasy about it, you know. They had no Jewish conscience. They knew that they were Jewish, and they would never have allowed themselves to be baptized. It was a community, but they didn't know very much about Jewishness. Nobody knew the Bible in my family, not even the Old Testament. Later on, I read the Bible, also clandestinely. When I was out of school, we moved to more elegant quarters. The teachers were dead, and so we moved along the river Isar. It was the best quarters of Munich. The main synagogue was nearer to the apartment where my parents lived first. But then there was a very old school--it was called the old shul--and it was near where we lived, then, later. It was the Orthodox school. I later heard that my parents-in-law paid for the rabbi and the whole thing; the whole thing was only paid for by some rich Jews. One of my father's cousins lived in our neighborhood, and she was always very sicklish. She told my mother that we could take her place. Everybody had to have a place in the temple. Even before, in the Reformed temple, we also had a place, which was rather expensive; my father had a place, and my mother. She said we could use her place, because she is



too sick to go to the temple. And then there was a little drawer at every place, and there I found a Bible. Instead of having a prayer book in my hand--my mother didn't see it-- I always read the Bible, which for women is not cleaned or whatever you say; it's very...

WESCHLER: ...bawdy. [laughter]

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja. [laughter] Anyway, I learned a lot from the Bible. [laughter]

WESCHLER: About how old were you then?

FEUCHTWANGER: I was sixteen years old--fifteen, sixteen years old.

WESCHLER: So that in a Jewish family of your status, it was common not to read the Bible at all, just a prayer book?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, prayer books, but also that not; we knew only about the Passover, and that we had to fast on Yom Kippur. I had to do that, too, and I once fainted at the temple because I wasn't used to that. It was not so much not eating, but it was a very cold day and the woman beside me had her fur coat, and this was smelling of this antimothing. This smell went into my head, and I went out. The women were sitting on the first story or so; the men were downstairs. I went down the stairs, and I fainted; I didn't know anything anymore. I woke up in the arms of a lady who saw me going out, saw how pale I was, and followed



me. If she hadn't caught me, I would have fallen down the whole stone stairs.

WESCHLER: Your childhood was definitely ill-fated.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, really. But there was another thing. It was the next year, I think. It was the end of the service. I came out down the stairs, and I saw somebody turning something there, below. And there was this famous Oktoberfest. I don't know if you know about it.

WESCHLER: Fasching?

FEUCHTWANGER: No. October. Fasching is in spring or late winter. All those things have something to do with Catholic holidays. Fasching is between this time of the birth of Christ and Easter. There was a time where pious Christians were not allowed to eat meat. But this was in October. It was what they call here a fiesta. There was a plague in Munich, and when the plague was over, for two weeks they made a great fiesta with lots of beer, and beer, and beer--and the big horses, which were famous, and the big carriages with those big kegs. There they wore always golden bells, and the coachmen were beautifully dressed, and so they went through. Those horses were very famous--big, enormous horses. Then there were tents outside of the city, and there you ate--it was a kind of barbecue. It was on little spears. There were young chickens, and also herrings, over coals. There were also, of course, all





kinds of amusement, like Disneyland. And there somewhere was written that there is a kind of cinematography. My father said, "Do you want to see that?" It was very expensive; it cost twenty pfennigs per person. So we went in, and it began to flimmer on the toile, on the screen, and here was I coming down the stairs. It was the end of the Yom Kippur. You see, I told you I saw somebody turning something, and they took me coming down the stairs from the temple. The film was called The End of Yom Kippur. So I saw my first movie star.

WESCHLER: Oh, my gosh.

FEUCHTWANGER: Isn't it amazing? I didn't know anything about it, and I didn't know how it came. My parents didn't know either. "But that's Marta!" they said.

WESCHLER: What was it like to see the first movie? Was that tremendously exciting?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, I was just amused, and I was wondering how it came to pass. Without knowing anything.

WESCHLER: About what year would that have been?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, about 1903 or so. No, a little more-- 1904, I think. The sense that I have of Munich is that there are these wonderful festivals that go on. That was in winter, you know.

WESCHLER: Right, and there's also the Fasching.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja. The time from the fifth of January



to--it was changed always, with the calendar--Ash Wednesday was a kind of carnival. In Latin, carne means meat. It was not allowed to eat meat in those times. But they danced; there was a big costume ball.

WESCHLER: How did your parents react to you as a young lady going to that?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, yes, they wanted me to, of course. How could you find a husband if you don't go dancing? But I was only interested in sports--not too much in dancing. That's what I noted before. I was always going to this gymnastic club. It was like this Russian girl, Olga Korbuto. We did the same thing.

WESCHLER: Gymnastics. That's called gymnastics.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja. Gymnastics. I was already twelve years old, I think, when I went there the first time. That cousin, the doctor, told my parents I shouldn't sit at home all the time, or just walk a little bit with the maid or the teachers in the Hofgarten, the court's yard, but I should go and do some sport. So my parents--because what he said, that was followed--brought me there. I was absolutely new--I never had seen a thing like that; I was a beginner--but after a month I was already in the first class. I became the best gymnast of the club, then I became the best gymnast of Munich, and then I became the best gymnast of Bavaria, and then the best



gymnast of Germany.

WESCHLER: Really?

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja.

WESCHLER: In competitions that they had?

FEUCHTWANGER: They had competitions, once, only once, in Munich. They came from all cities, even from Japan and from Berlin--everywhere. I was in the first class--Rang it was called--and we were on the big bar. I made this big swinging around. And I got a prize. The Prinzregent gave me the prize, and I had to give the Prinzregent a bouquet of flowers. Behind him he had an adjutant, this aide, who had a big helmet with big feathers, and so he always made eyes to me from behind the old Prinzregent. [laughter] And the Prinzregent gave me a brooch, which was very honorable, and I was very honored. I think it was "Frisch, Fromm, Fröhlich, Frei." Four F's. It means fresh, pious, gay, and free. So those F's were--it was a brooch made to look like a cross then. The Prinzregent gave me that as a prize. And it was not silver; it was lead. [laughter] Every year there was this kind of abturnen, it was called, you know. But this was the only international one. I was already fourteen years old or so. But before that I had already got a tennis racket, and I got a book of Adalbert Stifter, who was a classic. So I was always very honored.



I had a crush on the teacher. She was a young teacher and a very good gymnast. I was her favorite, and I had a great crush on her. She was a great Alpinist and made some of the first ascents of mountains. Once she fell down: the rope broke. She was [lucky]--it wasn't that bad--but she broke her thigh, and in those days it was a terrible thing. Very dangerous; mostly people [subsequently] died of pneumonia and those things. She had an old mother. She didn't know what to do when I visited her at the hospital, and then I offered myself to replace her. Because I had never made an examination, there had to be a bill in the government that I could replace her because I was the best student of hers. I didn't take any money. She got the money for it.

WESCHLER: What was her name? I'm going to drive you crazy with these things.

FEUCHTWANGER: No. Her name was Lisa Fries. We called her Miss Fries. For a whole year I replaced her.

WESCHLER: How old were you at that time?

FEUCHTWANGER: Fourteen, I think, ja. It was a great responsibility. I had fifty students in my class, and different kinds of classes, and different ages also. One, the smallest one, was a little girl with blond hair, blue eyes, and she was later--now she died--the first Mother Courage of Brecht. She became an actress. When I was in Munich, she gave a big party for me. When I told her,





"Do you know that you were my pupil?" she said, "Don't tell me about gymnastics. I hate gymnastics!"

WESCHLER: What was her name?

FEUCHTWANGER: Her name then was Gift. And as an actress she was Theresa Giehse. Very famous. You will know probably the name. Along with Helene Weigel, who was the wife of Brecht, she was known as the best Mother Courage. When I was in Munich, she invited me, of course, to the theater.

WESCHLER: It sounds like you spent an awful lot of your time doing gymnastics.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes. Twice a week I went there.

WESCHLER: Was that at the expense of your schoolwork?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, that was Wednesday and Saturday on our free afternoons. We had school Wednesday only in the morning. But usually we had seven hours. For four hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon, I had to go to school. In the meantime I had to go home for lunch, and then I had to go again to the school. Later it was seven hours, until five o'clock, and then I had to make my homework. I usually worked until eleven o'clock at night because I liked, for instance, to make compositions, and this was a very long thing. I was very proud when my compositions were read publicly. Very foolish things, you know, about ballads, classic ballads. You had to find



an excuse why you wrote about that, so I wrote a letter to my aunt and said, "The other day I read a beautiful ballad." And then I tell the ballad. Very dramatic.

WESCHLER: I don't want to forget to ask you now--maybe you can tell us now about the Strauss premieres.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja. Salomé was premiered in Munich for Germany, and it was terribly panned by the press. Terrible.

WESCHLER: What was it like being there in the theater? Strauss was already very famous, wasn't he?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes. No, he was--what do you call it?--controversial. He was known. By the way, he was from Munich, but he lived in Vienna, and also his performances were usually in Vienna. I don't know if it was the very first performance of Salomé, but that's the first performance in Germany.

WESCHLER: And it was not appreciated.

FEUCHTWANGER: It was terribly panned. Oh, terrible. You know, the critic [Dr. Alexander Dillmann] was a famous Wagner critic, and he only lived and breathed Wagner. Then came somebody like that, and it was for him cacophonous; he didn't understand it.

WESCHLER: How did the audience respond?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, nothing. They didn't respond neither way. Munich was a little lazy town, you know. The beer made people lazy, the drinking of beer, so they didn't



think very much. If you read Erfolg, the Success of my husband, it's about Munich. They were musisch; they were interested in theater; and they were interested in paintings. For instance, in the countryside, the peasant houses were often painted beautifully outside. It was not bad taste. They were schooled on the paintings in the churches, and these were of great painters. [Michael Walgemut], the teacher of [Albrecht] Dürer, also was a painter for the churches, for triptychs. So they were very interested in art, but they were not interested in learning very much. Very antiscientific, also.

WESCHLER: Well, we have you coming toward the later part of your teens, I guess. You were not going to go on in medicine or biology, but you were going on in literature and philosophy.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, but there was no other possibility. Medicine, then I couldn't--there were no lectures about it, you see, and I wanted to study. At the same time, I was very much interested in literature.

WESCHLER: As a woman, as a girl, were you at that point angry that you couldn't go on as a boy would be able to go on, or was it just not even thought about?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, it wasn't thought about, because nobody was doing it. The only girl in my class was the one who became a dentist. I didn't know any female students who



really studied. In the north of Germany it was otherwise--there were more girls who studied--but not in Bavaria.

WESCHLER: Of course, I'm getting at the whole feminist question, and in a way, I'm just wondering whether there was already at that point the beginnings of what later would become suffrage movements and that kind of thing.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, I heard about that, of course. But we more or less found it very comical. There was in Munich a woman called Anita Augspurg. That was the same time when the Jugendstil--do you know what that is? It was before expressionism. It was very stylized and in very bad taste, in a way. And that was the same time as Anita Augspurg. All those in fashion of--do you know the Swiss painter who painted women with long dresses, blue and red? [Ferdinand Hodler] It was all at the same time. They called it a reform. There was an exhibition once here in Pasadena of this art. Art nouveau. Jugendstil.

WESCHLER: Art nouveau. Okay.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja. it was in very bad taste. Now it's called quaint, and for a while it was even modern. It influenced very much also the rock-and-roll people now. And this was when I was becoming a teenager.

WESCHLER: How did you feel about it?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, I liked it. One house was painted **green**, **and there was** something like a serpent coming from the





roof down. I remember this was the same time as Anita Augspurg made her women's movement, and also these kind of dresses which were--they were straight dresses, like hanging dresses. They were called "reform dresses."

WESCHLER: How was Anita Augspurg met in Munich?

FEUCHTWANGER: People just laughed at her, you know. Munich was always the enemy of everything progressive or new; it should be always the old way.

WESCHLER: How did you, as a young woman, feel about it?

FEUCHTWANGER: I was interested in the painters very much. [Franz von] Stuck was a painter in those times; he was demonic. I knew him also personally, although not very near; but still I met him once at a Masken ball. He had a big neoclassic villa in a very beautiful part of Munich, above the river. It was all at the same time; it was a kind of awakening of art in Munich and also the impressionist force. Expressionism was even founded in Munich, because when the impressionists had their exhibitions, there were many things refused, and those who were refused founded their own movement--whatever you call it; a direction, maybe you call it--and this was expressionism. And this began in Munich, in a way.

WESCHLER: Which artists in Munich were...?

FEUCHTWANGER: There were almost every artist. There was also the Fauve, the great Fauve, and Franz Marc, who died in the First World War, right away. These kind of groups



were there. But nobody was ever born in Munich or Bavaria; they all came from the north or from everywhere. But Munich was a big attraction for them. It was partly from the carnival, from those costume balls, and this kind of greater freedom. There never were so many children born than nine months after the Carnivale, the Fasching.

WESCHLER: The storks were very, very active.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja. And all, of course, illegitimate. Those students and those painters made those big costume balls, and they decorated all that. It was very gay and free, but it was never vulgar, you know. Later on, in Berlin, they tried to do the same, and it was very vulgar there. They didn't have this--maybe it's the nearness to Italy, you know, this kind of natural tendency for beauty and gayness.

WESCHLER: So it's strange: you're describing a city which on the one hand is very reactionary, and on the other hand is very....

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja. Yes, but you know the sins, from during Fasching, they went confessing, and then everything was all right. It was over then. They had time then until next year to sin again.

WESCHLER: In your late teens, what was your relationship to the artistic movement? Did you know anyone at all?

FEUCHTWANGER: I knew some students, mostly because I was



always standing in front of those big shops where they had those reproductions of the great works of art. I never was in a museum before and saw everything only from reproductions. I was standing there for hours to look at those pictures, and usually the students talked to me. It was very forbidden, of course, to speak with somebody whom you didn't know, but I couldn't resist, and I met a lot of painters--some from Czarist Russia, who had to flee there because they were not allowed to be modern, and some French, even Americans. All those kinds of people I met, by standing in front of--Littauer's was the name of the shop, a big shop. So I met a lot of people I never would have met otherwise. They were not in the circle of my parents. I made walks with them in the public gardens. It was a kind of flirt, as you would call it now. Only I never flirted; they flirted.

WESCHLER: Oh, I see.

FEUCHTWANGER: I was always hard to get. I never liked to make any advances to men. The only men I liked were men who were not good looking. I didn't like those good-looking boys. It was nice to dance with them and to flirt with them, but I never had any feeling for a good-looking man. I liked people who were more lonely--like also my husband was, very lonely.

WESCHLER: It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that you



yourself were very beautiful.

FEUCHTWANGER: I was good looking, but I never found myself beautiful. I never understood that somebody could find me beautiful. I was successful, I could say, but I never found out--I couldn't. I had another ideal of beauty, you know. I just didn't like myself.

WESCHLER: Well, those who will be able to look at photographs of you may judge for themselves.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja. But I had another ideal. I liked girls with small mouths, and I had a big mouth--not very big, but still bigger. And I didn't like black hair; I had bluish-black hair. I didn't like that. I liked blonde hair. So I just didn't like myself. Maybe that was also a kind of attraction, that I was not conscious of myself. Oh, of course, with men: some wanted to commit suicide, also, and then they had to be watched by their friends, that they....

WESCHLER: You mean suicide over you?

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja.

WESCHLER: I notice, by the way, somewhere in these notes, that you weren't even kissed until you were nineteen.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes. I never allowed anybody to kiss me.

WESCHLER: Do you think that was common?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, not at all. No. But the funny thing is I was always--I had a very bad renommé, a bad name, because





I was so successful with boys. But I didn't like the young boys; I thought they were silly. I wanted to learn from a man; I wanted to hear new things. So I was always hard to get, and I was not a flirt--not at all.

WESCHLER: Did you get into any conflict with your parents over boys?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, they liked, of course, that I always had beautiful flowers, and that they sent me always presents, chocolate and books and so.

WESCHLER: The standard thing nowadays is for girls to be getting always into conflict with their parents over dates and that kind of thing. But you didn't do that?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, they didn't know about it. [laughter] I usually--it was the time when I went, for instance, to the gymnastic club. It was a long way to walk, so I met somebody, and we walked together and walked home together. When I was in the theater, there were always some students around, standing there and waiting when I came out. I got a letter about two or three years ago from a former maid of my parents--she must have been ninety years old--and she asked me, "Dear Miss Marta" (she called me still "Miss Marta"; she didn't know that I was married, or she didn't remember), "Are you still going around every day with another boy?" [laughter]

WESCHLER: And you replied?



FEUCHTWANGER: No, I didn't reply. But I wrote her.



TAPE NUMBER: II, SIDE ONE

JUNE 17, 1975

WESCHLER: As I turned over the tape, we remembered that there is one more little incident to tell about the stonecutters.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja. One day I got for Christmas, from the German Consulate General here, a [luxury edition of a Munich calendar]. When I saw the jacket, it looked familiar to me. It was a night picture, and on the left I saw one building which I recognized as a bank in Munich; it was the very short street where I was born. At the right, there are two windows, a light in the two windows, or behind the two windows, and that is the room where I was born.

WESCHLER: And that is the window from which you saw the stonecutters?

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja. From which I saw those stonecutters.

WESCHLER: Okay. I just wanted to ask you a few more questions about Munich, and then I think since we brought you up to this point, we'll go back and look at Lion's childhood. First, in my preparation for the interview, I was struck by two kinds of trends in the history of Bavaria and Munich. On the one hand, it really seems that one of the most liberal, progressive, constitutional



monarchies took place in Bavaria.

FEUCHTWANGER: I wouldn't know that. Wittelsbach [dynasty], the family, were liberal, but not the government.

WESCHLER: Okay, but let me continue the question: the other trend I get is that later the seat of fascism will be in Bavaria.

FEUCHTWANGER: No, that is not a seat of fascism because Hitler came from Austria, from Braunau. He lived in Munich. It was just that chance because he lived in Munich. He came back from the First World War and lived in Munich. That was because he wanted to study painting. He was not accepted in Vienna, at the academy. That was the reason why the National Socialist movement came about, because he was bitter that he wasn't accepted. If he had had a little more talent and been accepted, the whole National Socialism would never have happened. [ironic laughter]

WESCHLER: Well, along that line, then, between liberalism and fascism, how would you rate Munich in those days? Was it an autocratic or an authoritarian regime?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, the Wittelsbachs were very liberal, the whole family; it was a tradition in the family. But you must not forget, it was a Catholic country, reigned by the Catholic Church, more or less. The newspapers were Catholic, and this was of course a very strict and





conservative way of life.

WESCHLER: Was there what we would call more or less freedom of speech when you were growing up?

FEUCHTWANGER: Nobody said anything which wouldn't have been allowed. We were all bourgeois, and a bourgeois doesn't say anything which is a little bit daring or so. It was not even missed.

WESCHLER: But in general were people satisfied with the government?

FEUCHTWANGER: They were satisfied when they had their beer in the evening, and their Radi, which was a kind of root which they liked to eat with their beer. That was all what they wanted. There was a little grousing about things which were too expensive or so. Some said that there must be a war because we can't go on like that, it's too expensive to live life.

But the funny thing was that also the Church had in a way a kind of light touch. For instance, in the countryside, there was always the priest who had his housekeeper. She was usually not alone a housekeeper; it was just accepted by the peasantry that the priest was usually very well fed, had a good kitchen and a good cook, and that she was at the same time his girlfriend. It was just accepted like that. Nobody found something strange about it. Sometimes they had a child; then she



went away in time and then came back without child--the child was given up for adoption or whatever. So it was just a way of life: this kind of piety and also sin. I think it had to do also something with the confession, that they could clean themselves by confession; they had their Holy Communion, the Eucharist, and then they could begin again. Sinning. [laughter]

WESCHLER: So in a way the Catholics were no more Catholic than the Jews were Jewish?

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, that's true in a way. But in moral things, of course, they were very strict.

WESCHLER: For example?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, how young people had to be brought up and so. In the schools. But what they did privately, nobody cared much about it. There was no gossip newspaper. That was a good thing; if there had been one, it would have been otherwise. News just went from mouth to mouth, but it was not published. I think that was a very good thing. People didn't make gossip about one another so much.

WESCHLER: On the whole, judging from what will come later, I would say that these were among the most stable years of your life.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, absolutely. Ja, ja.

WESCHLER: It's often said that World War I just ripped



European society apart. Were there intimations of its fragility already?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, there was only one thing. All of Bavaria hated the Prussians and the emperor. What he said-- either they laughed about it, or they feared him, that it couldn't end very well. They were for their own royal family very much, but they hated all what the Hohenzollern did. When the war broke out, I remember when we had to stand in line to get something to eat--butter, for instance. I heard the women speak about it, that we would have never had this war without the emperor. "Our Ludwigl"--that was a kind of diminutive of the king--"would never have made war." And, "I must say I hate the Prussians more than I hate the Welsch." The Welsch were the French and Italians: they were called the Welsch. It was more or less a critical expression.

WESCHLER: A derogatory term.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja. And they hated the Prussians more than the French.

WESCHLER: About the Jews of Munich: would they have seen themselves every bit as much aligned to the royal family of Bavaria?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, absolutely yes. The Jews didn't feel Jewish. They did feel Bavarian. They were Bavarians. They liked their beer and they liked their Radi. They



liked their Gemütlichkeit, if you know that, the wine and the beer cellar. That was where Hitler later made his big speeches. And when there was a new brew, in spring, the Salvator beer, which was an extra strong beer.... The Jews never got drunk, like the others, but they liked to drink. I never saw a Jewish drunk in Munich. Or in Germany, by the way. But you could see many drunk Bavarians.

The same at night on the streets around. They were very, very--sometimes very ferocious. I didn't want to meet one on the street, you know. They didn't know what they were doing. The first time I was afraid was when I met a drunk. They had the knife always very loose. At the villages, every Sunday there was a big fight in the village inn. That was their best entertainment. They liked fighting. There was a playwright in Austria named [Ludwig] Anzengruber--he makes one scene like that: one man threw a chair into the lamp; it was filled with petroleum, oil. So it was dark, and nobody knew whom he was fighting or battling with. The morning, when it was light again, they had to look for the noses and ears which were lying around. Then there was always a doctor who could sew them on. They only had to be careful that they didn't sew the wrong nose or the wrong ear. It was like your baseball, you know.





WESCHLER: Did you actually see fights?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, yes.

WESCHLER: Knife fights and with swords, perhaps?

FEUCHTWANGER: No swords.

WESCHLER: Did people walk around with knives and swords?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, they had the knife in their shoes.

WESCHLER: And that was very common?

FEUCHTWANGER: In their boots. Ja, ja. On the countryside, mostly in the northern part of Bavaria, Nieder Bayern, lower Bavaria. There was even more fighting there than in higher Bavaria, in the mountains.

WESCHLER: Well, why don't we leave you at late teenage, and go back now and talk a little bit about Lion's life. I suppose this is a little bit more documented-- I've read little bits about his family--but you might start by talking about his family origins, what his parents and grandparents were. Also, of course, you can tell any stories that he might have told you about them.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, of course. But I thought it comes later, because when we made our long trip to Italy, we were for a while in Naples, and we had typhoid fever. When my husband couldn't sleep--we both had great pains, but I was a little better off because I didn't eat so many yongole ["mussels"], this kind of shellfish we shouldn't



have eaten--then in his half fantasies, he told me about his childhood. But we can also speak about it now.

WESCHLER: Well, why don't we speak about it now, and we can speak about other things later on. What were his grandparents? What did they do?

FEUCHTWANGER: I know from the mother that she came from Darmstadt. That is more near the Rhine, in Hessen.

WESCHLER: What was her maiden name? Do you remember, by chance?

FEUCHTWANGER: Bodenheimer. Johanna Bodenheimer. She came from a very rich family. They had coffee export and import and so forth. I remember that she told us that during the war with France, her father had to brew a lot of coffee for the army when the army came back from fighting on furlough. Once they were not fast enough in making the coffee, and the soldiers were furious because they were thirsty and hungry. And they wanted to throw her father into the boiling coffee. That's what she told us. They were very rich, and every child had a million dollars as a dowry. It was marks, of course, but it was about what now is dollars. And two sisters married two brothers in Munich, the two Feuchtwangers.

WESCHLER: How many children were there all together?

FEUCHTWANGER: I think twelve.

WESCHLER: That's a lot of millions of dollars.



FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja. But it didn't help much. I don't know. It vanished; it disappeared.

WESCHLER: Another Buddenbrooks.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, that's it. Absolutely. Ja, ja.

WESCHLER: So the two sisters married...?

FEUCHTWANGER: The two sisters married two Feuchtwanger brothers.

WESCHLER: Okay. Tell us a little about the Feuchtwangers.

FEUCHTWANGER: The Feuchtwangers came from Feuchtwangen, from this village in Franken that is a part of north Bavaria.

WESCHLER: That was--I had it written down here--Elkan Feuchtwanger was Lion's grandfather?

FEUCHTWANGER: I think so. How do you know? I wouldn't have known it.

WESCHLER: A little bird told me. [laughter]

FEUCHTWANGER: I don't know anything about it.

WESCHLER: Then I'll tell you. The bird told me that he had a margarine factory.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, I know that.

WESCHLER: Well, then, you do know something.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, and I know that the father of my husband was not Elkan.

WESCHLER: No, that was Sigmund.

FEUCHTWANGER: Sigmund, yes. And I know only from him.



Now I remember. I didn't remember that his name was Elkan, but I remember that they were the first people who manufactured margarine in Germany--in the whole world. But they didn't have the sense to have it patented or whatever it is. So then a famous firm in Holland copied the whole thing, and they became very big, you know--enormous manufacturers. Elkan was the first one who had a chemistry student, or chemistry doctor, to help him with his invention. They made this kind of margarine, which has been made mostly, I think, with oil and pork fat.

WESCHLER: Was Elkan himself something of an inventor, or was it mainly the chemistry student who invented it?

FEUCHTWANGER: He was, in a way, because he was interested in inventions, you know. He didn't do it so much for money. He didn't know that it would bring money. He was interested in the scientific way and the whole publication. He invited a lot of people from hotels and restaurants for a big dinner. Everybody was very enthusiastic about the beautifully cooked dinner. Then he got up and told them that they didn't eat butter. Because in those days you cooked with butter. He said, "That was not butter. That was margarine." Nobody would believe at first; they always were laughing about margarine. And this ruse brought out that he could then manufacture it. They also had a manufacture of soap and oil. It was very important during the





First World War. They made a lot of money with the army. They also imported from Rumania and Bulgaria, which was on the side of Germany, not on the side of the Allies, because the king was a German, King Ferdinand. They could import from there the pork fat and those things. So they were among the very few who could have manufactured all that. Oil and soap.

WESCHLER: My birdie told me that there were factories for this margarine in Holland and Rumania and even Egypt.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, but this one in Holland was the competition. It was their biggest competition. They took their secret away because it was not patented or whatever it had to be to--you know.

WESCHLER: But there was one in Egypt. Is that true also?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, I don't think so, but the father was in Egypt. [For an alternative version see Hilde Waldo, "Lion Feuchtwanger: A Biography," in Lion Feuchtwanger, A Collection of Critical Essays, John Spalek, ed. (Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingalls, 1972), p. 2--Ed.] What he did there, I don't know, but I think that he had a kind of branch.

WESCHLER: Well, that was Sigmund.

FEUCHTWANGER: Sigmund, ja, ja. But he was also more or less a scholar, and not a....

WESCHLER: How many children did Elkan have?

FEUCHTWANGER: No--Elkan I don't know. Sigmund had nine.



But Elkan had....

WESCHLER: Sigmund had how many brothers and sisters?

FEUCHTWANGER: He had a sister in Frankfurt and his brother. There were two sons, Louis and Sigmund. They had together the factory. But there were some sisters; I don't know how many. I know that Sigmund lived the life of a very Lebemann in Egypt. What would you call it? A man of the world. He had a great life there. There was not much spoken about it later.

WESCHLER: This was before he got married?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, before he got married.

WESCHLER: He was a playboy.

FEUCHTWANGER: Something like that, ja, ja.

WESCHLER: Later on, of course, we're going to be having your husband writing a great deal about that part of the world, Egypt and Palestine and so forth.

FEUCHTWANGER: Not much about Egypt.

WESCHLER: But Palestine, and I'm just wondering whether he....

FEUCHTWANGER: It has nothing to do with that. Josephus was always in his mind because he saw a big book that was lying in the drawing room about Josephus when he was a child.

WESCHLER: Well, before we get to him, how, we have Coffee marrying Margarine here. Do you have any idea roughly



what year that was?

FEUCHTWANGER: It was 1883.

WESCHLER: But then their first child was Lion.

FEUCHTWANGER: Was Lion, yes. I remember that my mother told me before I knew him, that.... Sometimes we met with Mrs. Feuchtwanger in the Court Gardens, it was called. It was near the residence of the king, a public garden. On Saturday, mostly the Jews [strolled through the gardens] when they came from the temple and the synagogue. The Orthodox synagogue was called temple, and the Reform temple was called synagogue. So we met, and we always recognized the Feuchtwangers because they were so badly dressed: always so gray and with very rough shoes. And everybody knew they were rich. But they did that because they were not allowed to carry anything on Saturdays, the Orthodox Jews. Also not an umbrella. So on Saturday, when it rained--or in case it rained, because it rained a lot in Munich--they had always those kind of waterproof dresses on. From far we could see those badly dressed girls and children, and they were always the Feuchtwangers.

WESCHLER: So, this is before you....

FEUCHTWANGER: Before I met my husband, yes--long before. They were still children. And my mother always told me about the first child when she saw Mrs. Feuchtwanger. She was very proud because she was so very rich, but my mother



knew her only very...

WESCHLER: ...fleeting...

FEUCHTWANGER: ...fleetingly, ja. She told me they had just had a beautiful little boy, with blonde hair and blue eyes, and that was Lion. It was all I knew about Lion, his childhood. Later on, there were so many children, nine children. It was not a very happy family in those days.

WESCHLER: All nine children survived infancy?

FEUCHTWANGER: They survived, yes, but now there are only two sisters [still] living. One now is very old. She is a year older than I, and she is not very well in her mind [Franziska Diamand]. Another one lives in Israel, and she is very active. She gives yoga lessons, and her son is a director of the radio and television there in Israel. She lives with him. Always when she writes me, she says how busy she is; and she makes a lot of money.

WESCHLER: What is her name, by the way?

FEUCHTWANGER: Henny.

WESCHLER: Henny? And her son's name?

FEUCHTWANGER: Michael. Mischa.

WESCHLER: Last name?

FEUCHTWANGER: Reich--no, they were Reich in Germany, but now the name is translated into Hebrew. Ohad. I think it means Reich. Henny Ohad and Mischa Ohad.





WESCHLER: Again you pass your test. Well, let's take up the cue: you said that they were not a very happy family.

FEUCHTWANGER: No.

WESCHLER: Why so?

FEUCHTWANGER: Too many in one apartment, you know; they couldn't do very well. And Lion was very unhappy because he was overworked. He was the first child. He had to study Hebrew every morning before he went to high school or college.

WESCHLER: One thing, before we get to his education: I gather, of course, that with our Buddenbrook family here, they are no longer as wealthy as previously.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja. That's a story by itself. It comes later. It's not so easy, you know. I have to tell that one by one. It wouldn't make any sense if I would tell you now why they lost their money. Later, much later it has to be developed in the family. I think more important is why he was so unhappy.

WESCHLER: Okay. Why don't we start there?

FEUCHTWANGER: He was a very good student. He was very ambitious, and his parents were even more ambitious for him. He was in the best gymnasium, which is high school and college together, in those days.

WESCHLER: The Wilhelm Gymnasium?

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, Wilhelm Gymnasium. It was the best and



the most strict. It was also the gymnasium of the pages, those sons of the aristocrats who were later aides at the court. They were all together at this gymnasium. It began at eight o'clock in the morning, and he had to get up every day at five o'clock to go to the Jewish teacher to learn Hebrew and Judaism. He worked every night until eleven to make his homework. So you could see that it's not healthy for a child. He was the only one who was not tall. The others were all very tall and very strong children. He was not developed so like the others--he was developed in his mind, but not in his body. He was not very good looking, but he had beautiful hair and blue eyes. But he couldn't compete with these strong and rough and raucous children. The sisters were even worse than the brothers. I was nothing in comparison to them. [laughter]

WESCHLER: Really? These Munich girls really have a reputation.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja--no, it was not the Munich girls; it was the Jewish girls. I think it was a reaction--at least it was with me--that because I was a good student, I wanted to show them that I could also be a good gymnast. I just wanted to show them, you know. I always liked, of course, to climb and to fight, but this kind of gymnastics I wanted just to show them. It was a little bit like that with the sisters and brothers of my husband. So the next



brother was also a scholar.

WESCHLER: His name?

FEUCHTWANGER: Ludwig. Called Lutschi. He was later director of the greatest scientific publishing house. They published all the great philosophers of this time. Werner Sombart and so forth.

WESCHLER: What was the name of that company?

FEUCHTWANGER: Duncker and Humblot. Something like that. He was also tall and good looking. The next brother was tall and not so good looking, but a very great playboy.

WESCHLER: His name?

FEUCHTWANGER: Martin. He was also good looking, but I didn't like his looks. The fourth brother was good looking, too, and he took over the factory. There were four--three brothers didn't want to take over the factory, because they were interested in science or literature or....

WESCHLER: In the humanities, in the sciences, and in girls.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja. Girls was also [the interest of] the fourth, but the fourth was the least intellectual.

WESCHLER: What was his name?

FEUCHTWANGER: Fritz. And there were sisters between all these. It was like with Thomas Mann also.

WESCHLER: Boy, girl, boy, girl?

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja.



WESCHLER: Just so that we can complete the record, what were the names of his sisters?

FEUCHTWANGER: The oldest sister was Franziska. She was also very sporty, very athletic. They were not as good as I was, but they were maybe stronger than I was. We were sometimes fighting together, because they didn't like me--I was in the other sport club, you know. We were fighting together because they wanted to show me how good they are, but although they were stronger, I was faster, I think. I was not as big and tall as they were, and also not as strong with my bones, but in a way I was--they hated me, because I was better. [laughter] I was in the proletarian club; this sport club was very proletarian. They were in the more aristocratic club where the high school daughters were. The proletarian were of course the better sports, the better athletes, because they were from childhood out on the street; they were used to it. I liked the proletarian better, and I hated these teenage girls, who spoke--also at school--about actors, and wrote their name and ate it with the bread and butter, you know. And also manicures, and clothes. I was only interested either in reading or in sport. The whole club, I hated because they were so--we called them monkeys.

WESCHLER: What were the names of the other three sisters?

FEUCHTWANGER: Franziska and Bella. She died in a





concentration camp in Theresienstadt. Then came Henny; then came Medi (her real name was Marta). Four sisters and five brothers. The brothers were Lion, Lutschi (that was Ludwig), Martin, [Fritz], and Bertold. Bertold was the hero of the family. He was a volunteer in the First World War immediately. He was so fresh--we met once on a mountain hut, his general or his major or something or other, and he said he never knew if they should shoot him for insubordination or give him a medal, because he was just a--they couldn't hold him, he answered [back to] his officers in the field. But he was so great in valor, so courageous, that he was even.... On the corners of the streets, in Munich, every night there was a day communication, you know, how the war is going on. And he was named once as the hero of the day. He was seventeen years old. When he came on furlough, he told us that he didn't do that because he was so patriotic but rather he just was so bored--it was so boring, so he had to do something. Once he had a bet with this officer. He wanted never to be an officer; they thought maybe they could suppress his fresh mouth if they made him a corporal or a sergeant. Jews were never officers, only subofficers, or so they called them. But he didn't accept that. He said then he couldn't do what he wants, he would have to be careful with his subordinates. So



he had a bet that in the next trench, a French trench-- the officer said it was empty--he said there were soldiers in it, and they made a very high bet. Then he took some hand grenades and crawled, at night, on his belly until he found a big hole from a shrapnel. He went into this hole, and threw the hand grenades out from all sides to all sides, and shouted terribly. Those French people thought there is a whole company coming; they all came out of the trench with their arms up and threw their guns down. He told them, "So you go now back to my trench." He told them, "Everyone has to carry his gun," and he went back with the whole trench of French. And for that he got the Iron Cross, First-Class, which never a Jew had become until that time. They had only gotten Second-Class.

WESCHLER: And it was all because of a bet?

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja. Then he did something else which I don't remember, and there came one of his officers to my mother-in-law and told her how proud they are: "He is the pride of the regiment." He would have wanted him to give him the order of Maximilian's Knight of the Cross, which is the highest order. But then he said, "But you can understand, we can't give it to a Jew. So we gave it to his officer."

WESCHLER: Just incidentally here, I hadn't realized that there was that kind of problem for Jews in the German army.



FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja. Only the doctors could become officers. They were in the medical corps.

WESCHLER: That continued all the way through World War I?

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja. But Berti didn't want it, because he said he wants to be independent, and his superior got this Maximilian Ritterorden which he had earned. But the funny thing is that--I must find somewhere something his wife sent me--his widow is also living, in Florida. He died of cancer. And she sent me some things from this young boy.

WESCHLER: You mentioned that Lion was always getting beaten up by his sisters.

FEUCHTWANGER: No, he was not beaten up, but--that was not true, no.

WESCHLER: What generally was his relationship with.... He certainly didn't have a problem with being lonely.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, he was lonely because they didn't accept him. He was not strong enough, you know, not like them. They were loudmouthed and rough, and he didn't want that; he wasn't interested in those things. It disturbed him in his studies. I remember even that his brother Ludwig, who was not like Lion--he was also strong, and he was more with the other brothers and sisters--that he once gave his sister Marta a slap because she



disturbed him so much with her shouting that he couldn't study. And that was in--the whole family, you know: he slapped his sister. It was just not done. You can quarrel, but....

And then all of them had the same stomach ailment. All of them. They always quarreled, when they were eating dinner, and of course something happened. One sister, Henny, who is now still alive, had bleeding of the stomach. My husband was alone with her--the others were somewhere else, in the countryside--and she was lying there on the floor bleeding from the stomach. He was with her all alone, until a doctor came. Usually people died from that.

WESCHLER: How old was he at the time?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, he was maybe eighteen or so. But for instance, I wanted to tell you an example of how he felt. They made a tour. Every year they had a house in the countryside, with the cook, and also the coachmen from the factory came with them to help. And so they went with a kind of van, you know. There was all the kitchen utensils, because they cooked--they were Orthodox, you know; they couldn't eat in a restaurant. So it was a whole moving van which they took with them. Also the sisters and brothers usually brought their friends. It was a whole procession. Then they made great tours, walking, hiking. Their father liked to hike on mountains--





not very strong, and not very high mountains, but still every day was another excursion. Once they came through a swamp, and Lion was always the last one. He was shorter and had not the long legs. They were running, and he was always the last one. And he became stuck in the swamp. He couldn't come out anymore. He shouted and shouted, and the others only just laughed and didn't help him. He only sank more, till they finally helped him out. His shoes were left in. He never forgot that anymore. His whole life he went through with that: how they just laughed when he was stuck in the swamp.

WESCHLER: How did he finally get out?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, finally I think they helped him at the end, but they just--the laughing was.... It was not so much the danger that he could sink in the swamp but that they laughed at him.

WESCHLER: It's very unusual to hear that kind of story about an oldest child.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja. But he was not strong, because he had to learn too much. He had not enough sleep. He had to fight for his sisters and brothers. The others didn't have to do that. They didn't have to go to the Jewish school. They could go at eight o'clock at school and not at five o'clock, and nobody was looking if they did well at school or not, like with him. So he had to



break the ice for the others. He was the oldest, and that's why it was so difficult for him. The others had it easy. They did just what they wanted. When they were bigger, their mother just couldn't get along--couldn't help to supervise them all the time. But Lion was the oldest, and he was supervised.

WESCHLER: I'd like to talk a little bit more about....

FEUCHTWANGER: But he became very athletic, too, later on.

WESCHLER: Right. That's my impression. I'd like to talk a little bit about his father and also his mother. You said that in addition to managing the firm, his father was also a scholar.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, he was a scholar, studied history and also Hebrew.

WESCHLER: Had he been to a university or anything?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, I think, but he never was--either you were a student or not, you know. In those days, nobody was really a student and made examination or graduated or something like that. But he learned a lot.

He was in high school, and--in those days they went rarely to colleges.

WESCHLER: His interests were in Hebrew studies and history?

FEUCHTWANGER: Hebrew studies. He had a famous Hebrew library, which later on, when he died, the two brothers sold to England, without telling the other sisters



and brothers. This was that kind of family, you know.

WESCHLER: Which were the two that sold it?

FEUCHTWANGER: I think it was--and I would--I don't want to....

WESCHLER: You don't want to slander them.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, because also there are still the widows living and their children also. I don't want to....

WESCHLER: I should think that Lion would have loved to have had that library.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, of course. Also, at least they should have--it belonged to the whole family, not just to those two. And the same was with the stamp collection, a famous stamp collection, with the youngest son. It was more or less the youngest son who collected them. But nobody heard anything anymore about it.

WESCHLER: Was the father very strict?

FEUCHTWANGER: He was a nice man, in a way, but it was too much. The mother was very strict, very bourgeois, from a small town. And Munich was a big town, in a way; it was the capital of Bavaria. So when she came from Darmstadt, which was a small town, she was even more strict than other people in Munich.

WESCHLER: Was the father henpecked, do you think?

FEUCHTWANGER: I wouldn't say that. The mother was too much of a traditionist to henpeck somebody. But she had a way to dominate the whole family without saying anything.



When she was angry, you couldn't hear it in her voice, but you could see it in her eyes. She pressed her lips together, and that was like shouting. They were more afraid of her silence than they would have been if she had shouted. The father also had lots of respect of her. I don't think it was a great love between them. It was a traditional wedding. But the mother in a way also respected him as the father of the family. She became angry with the children when they gave him answers. It was very bourgeois. It was--what do you call it? High bourgeois or something; not middle bourgeois like my parents were. It was a little higher.

WESCHLER: Haut bourgeois.

FEUCHTWANGER: Not yet haut bourgeois, but almost.

WESCHLER: Presque haut bourgeois.

FEUCHTWANGER: Presque. Ja, ja. [laughter]

WESCHLER: Well, I think maybe we should stop for today. When we begin next time, we'll do a little more about Lion's education and bring it up to where you meet him.





TAPE NUMBER: II, SIDE TWO

JUNE 20, 1975

WESCHLER: Last time, we talked rather extensively about Lion's relationships with his siblings. I wanted to talk a little bit more extensively about his relationship with his mother and his father. We might start with his mother. We said that she was more or less the dominant person.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, she was rather dominant, but she never spoke loudly. She always spoke very slowly. She only pressed her lip together, and everybody was pale. She never did anything else. But she was a good representative for the family. She was a very ladylike woman. She went along very well with her husband. But she also heard once that her husband had a relationship with her sister.

WESCHLER: True?

FEUCHTWANGER: I don't know. I wasn't there. I only heard that.

WESCHLER: What happened?

FEUCHTWANGER: Her sister married the brother of her husband. I don't know more about it; I just heard this rumor.

WESCHLER: This is really an example of oral history as gossip.



FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja, absolutely.

WESCHLER: You had mentioned that her relationship with your husband was not especially close.

FEUCHTWANGER: No, not at all, because my husband did all the things which he shouldn't do. First of all, he was not a religious person, and they were Orthodox. Then, he went away because he couldn't stand any more of this-- it was the orthodoxy which in a way made him leave the house, because it was too time-consuming. He had always to go to the temple when he wanted to study or go somewhere else. And then he didn't want to be in the family anyway. He was interested in actresses since he wrote very early for Die Schaubühne. He [reviewed] the Munich theater, so he met a lot of actresses and actors, and this was the company he preferred, rather than that he should always have to stay at home and sit there with the family. Then he said finally, "I don't want to stay at home anymore. I don't take even your money anymore." He earned his life by giving lessons and took a room in a very cheap house where he had not even water in his room. It was a single room very high up in a house, in the attic. When he wanted some water, he had to go to the neighbor, who was a court lackey who didn't like Jews. And he knew by the name that my husband was a Jew. It was very embarrassing always to go every day to this lackey to get some water to wash himself.



WESCHLER: Well, again, that's going to be later material that we'll handle in more depth. I'm at this point more interested in--you mentioned his one childhood memory about being in the swamp. Were there other stories from his childhood? That one has more to do with his siblings. Do you have any other memories about his parents?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, the parents were never unkind to him. They just disapproved his whole life and his whole mentality. There was always some nagging. They didn't shout with him; they didn't quarrel with him. It was just that sometimes during the meals, the mentioning of something could upset him. He felt always that they were disapproving of him.

WESCHLER: Was this equally on the father's and the mother's side?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, the mother didn't say anything, usually. She just pressed her lips and closed her mouth. The father sometimes--he was a nice and kind man, in a way, but he was unhappy about my husband, probably, and made remarks which my husband, of course, didn't like as a young man. To be always disapproved of everything. He'd just say, "Ach, der Lion!" or something like that. That was enough. Then he knew. This was always during the meals. They didn't see each other at other times; so the meals were always a terrible event for everybody. They all got stomach



ulcers because they ate the disapproval with the meal.

WESCHLER: That was true, you think, of all the children, or of Lion especially?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, all the children, but my husband was the oldest and had to break the ice. The others had it easier. They did also just what they wanted, and the parents couldn't do anything about it, so they made all these remarks. It was always during the meals that those things happened.

WESCHLER: You mentioned that the family was unhappy. Is it unhappy for Lion, or was it...?

FEUCHTWANGER: For all of them.

WESCHLER: It was just an unhappy family--everyone was at each other all the time?

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, and also, everyone was such an individualist. Sometimes there are families where one likes the other. One and the other form alliances. There was one between the two youngest sisters a little bit, but still they were quarreling also. There was always quarreling. They disapproved of the parents and their whole way of life, and the parents disapproved of the children. There was no tenderness or feeling to be approved of, to be accepted. I know that the biographer of my husband [Dr. Lothar Kahn], who now publishes a biography of him, a big biography, wrote to my sister-in-law in Israel. I told him





the same thing when he was here, and she confirmed what I said: that they didn't like each other, and they didn't like their parents, and the parents didn't like them.

WESCHLER: It surprises me about the father having trouble because I would think that the father, who in addition to being a businessman was also a scholar....

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, he was not a businessman--he only inherited the factory--and he would have rather done something else, more studying.

WESCHLER: Well, I would think that such a man would have been delighted at the intellectual figure of his son.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, he was very proud about my husband as long as he was in the gymnasium, studying, in high school, and college, and university, and when he had made his doctoral dissertation very early. But from then on, my husband was on his own, and then he disapproved everything what he did.

WESCHLER: But in the early days when he was still a child, was there more approval?

FEUCHTWANGER: He was very proud of him, that he had always good grades. In those days, also, I think it wasn't so bad, because my husband was so overworked. He was not a very strong child, and he had no sleep because he had to go to the Hebrew school in the morning at five o'clock. Also he felt the orthodoxy to be so humiliating for him. He



was not allowed to carry books on Saturday because it's not allowed for Orthodox Jews to carry anything. They are not allowed to carry their own key. They have a key tied around the waist. They are not allowed to carry a key in the pocket. When he went to school, the maid had always to carry his books--going behind him, of course. It was very, very humiliating and embarrassing for him when the other children saw him coming with the maid bringing his books. And then the Orthodox Jews have something which is called--I don't know the English name. It was around the neck, a piece of canvas, with some threads on it, called an arbas Kanfes [tallit katon]. They had to wear that always. Nobody knew--also my husband didn't know why. In gymnastics class, when they had to disrobe themselves, he had this thing on, and everybody asked what it is. He even didn't know himself what it was. They laughed, of course, made fun out of it. So that everything what had to do with his family was embarrassing.

WESCHLER: Was it unusual for Jews in Munich to be Orthodox?

FEUCHTWANGER: There were very few Orthodox there. The temple was very small and was supported by the family Feuchtwanger along with another family, the Fraenkels, who were also related to the Feuchtwangers. They paid for the rabbi and for everything.

WESCHLER: About how large beyond that? How many people



were part of the temple?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, I don't know. Maybe thirty or fifty families, if as much as that. When I was there--it's a very small temple, and it was not full. People were older already and didn't go out anymore. Not all of them had children, or small children. Some came from little communities where there was a Jewish community. They were together; they didn't go to school with others in the small towns. When they came to Munich, which was a big town in those days, they were in school with others, and the others didn't know about it. When they were in Jewish school, then nobody would care about that.

WESCHLER: Well, you've mentioned two primary causes of your husband's frustration with orthodoxy, the overwork and the humiliations involved.

FEUCHTWANGER: Also, it would all have been easy if he would have believed in it, you know. But he didn't believe in it.

WESCHLER: That's what I wanted to get at. As a child, did he just...?

FEUCHTWANGER: He just didn't believe anymore. First, I think it was just to contradict everything. And then he read enlightened philosophers--Spinoza and all that. In a way, he thought that he was right. And he had to do all those old-fashioned things.



WESCHLER: At about what age was he reading the philosophers?

FEUCHTWANGER: I didn't know him then, but I think it was about fifteen or so. He was very precocious and read everything what he could lay his hands on. He studied everything.

WESCHLER: There was never really a period in his life when he more or less naively believed?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, I don't think so. In my life, yes, but not in his life. I think from the beginning. His older cousins were the same. So he heard from them. They told him about it, and he read about it, the whole thing. He was not cynical, but he didn't believe this way of--he found it all so hypocritical. For instance, there is a thing: the Jews were not allowed to have their shop open on Saturday or on holidays. But a factory cannot close down; you can't lock down and say, "We'll come back on Monday," or so. Sunday also was closed. And what with the fire, and all that--and in those days there was not all electrical--so somebody had to work. It always had to go on, the work. So they sold the whole factory to the bookkeeper for one mark. Every Friday, they sold the factory for one mark to the bookkeeper, and then they took it back on Sunday evening or the next Monday. Lion found that hypocritical. He said that they cheated God, that also the factory shouldn't work.





WESCHLER: What kind of answers would they give to something like that?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, they wouldn't give any answers. That's what also was a kind of reason to question or to quarrel. He said, "What kind of piety is it when you do those things which cheat when you believe in God?" They just didn't understand it. It was so much tradition already, and they didn't want to hear about it. They said, "We cannot close down." And also it was true: all the workmen in the factory, what should they do if they interrupt the work? It couldn't just begin again the next week. You couldn't do anything. Possibly they felt also that it wasn't right, but they had to do it. Now I see it otherwise, and also my husband saw it later otherwise. But then, in your youth, when you are much more radical in your judgment, you are not tolerant. So he only saw the hypocritical side and not the necessity of it.

WESCHLER: Nevertheless, there were aspects of Judaism which apparently were very striking to him. I'm thinking particularly of the Josephus volume, for example. His father had a very large Jewish library.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, very large. It has been sold later to England. It was a famous library.

WESCHLER: Apparently, for instance, that Josephus volume was impressive to him as a youth.



FEUCHTWANGER: Yes. Of course, it has also been sold.

WESCHLER: But about his memories of that: did he study Josephus very much as a young person?

FEUCHTWANGER: It wasn't like studying, you know. He read it and he was enthralled with it, but he didn't feel that it was studying.

WESCHLER: Was it an early edition of Josephus, or what?

FEUCHTWANGER: I don't know. I never saw it. But also that is not important. Important is what's in it, the content.

WESCHLER: Sure. What kinds of things about Josephus interested him at that early age?

FEUCHTWANGER: He only read it, and it was always in his mind, because it was also the contradictions of this man, which were so very much like the modern Jews, also. And then there was another time, but I don't know if I should speak about it already now. When we were in Rome, there is this--should I tell it?

WESCHLER: Sure.

FEUCHTWANGER: There is the Titus Arch in the Forum in Rome. The Arch of Titus is where Josephus had to go through, you know, to humiliate himself, to be freed from slavery. He was a slave. There is also shown in a relief the triumphal march of Titus, the Jews who had to carry things to the emperor as slaves. And this impressed on



him. I think the resolution to write about Josephus came then when we were going through this Arch of Titus.

WESCHLER: Given that there was an ambivalence about this relationship to Judaism--we've seen the darker parts--were there any things that he did cherish of his Jewish upbringing?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, there was nothing to cherish. It was the same as whether you have blonde hair or black hair--it was so natural to be Jewish for him. He never felt humiliated to be Jewish, but he only saw the hardship. And the hardship was not in being Jewish but in being Orthodox. That was a great difference. He was interested in Judaism very much. I don't say what is always the wrong thing to say, that he was proud of being Jewish. I think we cannot be proud of anything which we didn't do ourselves. He could be proud if he had finished writing a book and found it good, or even if he wrote his doctoral dissertation and got his degree. But why should he be proud just because his parents were Jewish, and he was--what is the reason to be proud of it? I think it's too chauvinistic. When you are proud of something, you are contemptible of the others, who are not Jews. You shouldn't be proud; neither the Gentile should be proud to be Gentile, nor the Jews to be Jewish. He never spoke about that, but I think it was his mentality also.



WESCHLER: Before we move away from this, you say he woke up at five in the morning to go to Hebrew school. For how long did that go on?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, until he was out of school.

WESCHLER: So, until what age was that, about?

FEUCHTWANGER: I think seventeen or eighteen, I don't know.

WESCHLER: And, of course, he was fluent in Hebrew.

FEUCHTWANGER: He was fluent in Hebrew; he was fluent in Latin; he was fluent in Greek. He could even translate from Greek to Latin and vice versa.

WESCHLER: Well, that brings me to the next question, which is to talk a little bit about his other schooling.

FEUCHTWANGER: He was not only ambitious. He was ambitious, maybe because he was smaller than the others and didn't look so well, and he wanted to show them what he knew. In this way, he was very unkind to his sisters who were less intellectual. When they asked him something, he said, "Oh, you wouldn't understand it"--or something like that. It was his revenge because they treated him so badly when they were children. The next brother, who was a scientist--I was a friend of his sister's; that's how I know all these things--when they asked him something, he was very patient to explain to them what they wanted to know. But Lion never wanted to speak with them at all. They had not a good relationship, and it was also partly





his fault. But how can you expect tolerance from a boy of seventeen or so who is unhappy with his family?

WESCHLER: Was there no sibling with whom he had any close relations?

FEUCHTWANGER: He had some cousins who were very good friends of his. His best friend was a cousin, but a second-degree cousin, I think, who later died of tuberculosis.

WESCHLER: What's his name?

FEUCHTWANGER: Dr. Feuchtwanger, also. Igo Feuchtwanger. His mother was Hungarian, and his father was one of the bankers. He was a very intelligent and very kind man-- I knew him when he was younger--and he had a great influence on my husband. He was a little older. He was also a nonbeliever, and he had a great influence on my husband.

WESCHLER: In what way?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, the Spinoza way, you know. You have to read Spinoza, so you know what it's all about.

WESCHLER: You think that it was through this cousin that Spinoza became...?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, I think so. And also against orthodoxy. Because my husband just suffered, but he didn't know why. So with this cousin, it was easier for him; he could make him understand.



WESCHLER: But of his brothers and sisters, there were none that he liked more than the others?

FEUCHTWANGER: No. They were not nice to him, and he was not nice to them. Later on, we were good friends with his oldest brother, his next brother, Lutschi, but only when he was married.

WESCHLER: Well, can you talk a little bit about what the regular school was like, what classes he enjoyed, whether he had teachers that were influential?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, yes. He enjoyed everything that he learned, everything what he could lay hands on, even shorthand. He was very good in shorthand, and it helped him a lot in his work. He was, of course, most interested in history and literature.

WESCHLER: Were there any teachers that were particularly influential?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, not at all. They were all too bourgeois, and too old-fashioned, and too far away from the children. And also the headmaster--whatever he was called, the president--he was a great scholar, they say, but he was very strict and punished the pupils. When he was walking through the Maximilianstrasse, where this gymnasium was and where some of his students lived, when he saw one on the street after nine o'clock, he relegated him. You know, he was so strict. Everything was fear: in the



home it was fear; in the gymnasium it was fear. One teacher, he said, was nice. I think it was a German teacher, and his daughter was later an actress, and my husband knew her very well as an actress later on.

WESCHLER: [Johanna] Terwin. She was married later with Alexander Moissi, who was a very famous actor in [Max] Reinhardt's theater.

WESCHLER: Did Lion show any interest in science?

FEUCHTWANGER: Not much, no. Maybe in anthropology.

WESCHLER: So it was primarily humanities.

FEUCHTWANGER: More in humanities, ja. He learned everything what he had to learn. He was good in algebra. But he was not very much interested in chemistry or in physics. He learned it, what he had to learn at school, because he wanted good grades; so he learned everything. But it was not his favorite side of the study. He was very much interested in languages.

WESCHLER: You mentioned Latin and Greek.

FEUCHTWANGER: Latin, Greek, and French, and Italian. Not English.

WESCHLER: Getting out of the school: apparently the family went to the country.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes. During the vacation. They rented a house, and had all the maids and a cook there.

WESCHLER: Where was this?



FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, different places every year, most every year in another place. But very often on the Kochelsee. That is a lake in the mountains. And all their friends came there, mostly Gentile friends, and they enjoyed the whole thing. They did everything what was necessary. They said, "Now, it is Saturday evening. We cannot make light anymore," because the maid had to make the light. And they knew all the prayers. They were absolutely at home in orthodoxy, and the Feuchtwanger children didn't care. [laughter] It was very funny.

WESCHLER: Was that a period of respite for him though? He didn't have to wake up at five in the morning....

FEUCHTWANGER: No, they were not allowed to sleep very late. But what he liked most of all was when the father made with them--not climbing but excursions in the mountains. He liked that very much. Also he was allowed to have friends with him.

WESCHLER: Do you remember any particular stories of those hikes--things that impressed him, besides the swamp?

FEUCHTWANGER: Later on he had a friend with him, very often two friends. One was a singer who studied voice [named Monheimer], and another was a musician from the orchestra of the Royal Theatre; you know, that's the opera. This was a very interesting man, but he was also a crook in a way. He couldn't do anything else: that was his nature.





When he played cards with my husband he always cheated him and won things from him.

WESCHLER: Who was this? What was his name?

FEUCHTWANGER: I shouldn't say his name, but I don't think he has any relatives anymore. He has died, also. Afterwards, when we were here after the war, he wrote the most admiring letters to my husband: how he'd read all his books during the Nazi time--he tried to get them from everywhere--and how he admired him, and mostly Josephus. He was very proud to have had him as a friend. But when they were friends, he always cheated him. They were good friends, and he always said, "You are a genius, but you are so dumb, I can cheat you. You don't even see it." [laughter]

WESCHLER: So are you going to give us his name, or not?

FEUCHTWANGER: Hartmann Trepka. He came partly from Poland; and so Hartmann [was German] and Trepka was the Polish part.

WESCHLER Although your husband wasn't athletic especially, he was very....

FEUCHTWANGER: No, he liked athletics, but not in competition. He was a very good swimmer, and even diving--not diving when jumping, but diving down to get things out of the bottom. He could stay very long underwater. He was a very good swimmer, even twice saved somebody from drowning. And he was very enduring: he could carry very hard, very



heavy backpacks, also going on and on up the mountains without tiring. But for instance, he couldn't learn skiing. He tried to learn skiing and he was not agile or skillful enough. He lacked every skill. But he was very enduring. He could do it; he could outstand everybody. We were once on a very high mountain in Austria, in the Tyrol, and when the others had felt it--you know, from the high, sometimes you feel heart beating--he never felt it. He was without any dizziness. He could climb on the highest peaks and also towers. Sometimes, in Spain, when we were on the spires, very high--you go outside around the towers and the fence was very low, not higher than your knee--he could go around without feeling it, and I was always so dizzy. But I was so ashamed that I was dizzy, so I went behind him and didn't look down; I looked only on his head. But I was so glad to be back, and I never would have admitted it. But he didn't feel that. Also he was never seasick. That has to do something with the same thing, I think. He was never seasick in the greatest storm when everybody else was lying around. So he had many things which were very acceptable as an athlete.

WESCHLER: Was he at all sickly?

FEUCHTWANGER: No.

WESCHLER: He was small....

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes. But he didn't look so small as he



really was. He was about as tall as I was, but, of course, as a woman I had high heels, or something like that, so I looked taller than he. He had broad shoulders, and he didn't look sickly. He was very well built in his way.

WESCHLER: Continuing with a rather impressionistic survey of his childhood and adolescence, were there any early literary influences, writers that he liked particularly?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes. Oscar Wilde was a very great influence on him, Salomé, for instance. Lion wrote also plays. He was very young, still. He wrote some plays in one act. They have been performed in a theater which usually has only volks plays, dialect comedies. This director accepted his plays. There were three one-acts.

WESCHLER: How old was he at this point?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, he'd be twenty or so. But in those days, you know, twenty was not like now twenty. It was like sixteen. No experience, and everything was provincial and backward. So his whole family, of course, went to the theater. One play was a biblical play [König Saul] and another one was a medieval play [Prinzessin Hilde]. Then before the performance started, the man who played the bard who had to sing--he had to have a little beard, because it was the time of those bards and singers; it was Gothic or something--and the beard burned before the



first performance. This man had a very thick, plump face, and he just didn't look like a bard without a beard. [laughter] People already laughed when he came onto the stage. So that was not a good beginning. The play was called Prinzessin Hilde, and I don't know much about it because it never has been printed. But I know what he told me about it. In Salomé, maybe you will remember, there's always those repetitions. Lion's play was in the style of Oscar Wilde, and Lion exaggerated it. "How beautiful is the Princess Salomé today!" It begins like that. And Lion's said, "How beautiful is the Princess Hilde today!" And it never ended; and finally the audience said, "How beautiful...." [laughter] My husband was with the director in the box, and he began to laugh himself. I remember that the critic I read--you know I didn't know Lion yet--said he bit in his handkerchief to hold from laughing. So it was a terrible, just a terrible thing. It fell through. With this laughing in the most tragic situations. Then the family went home very angry with their son and brother. But to crown this all, his grandmother lost her diamond brooch; so that was unforgivable. That was even the worse of all. So they went home, and he didn't come home. Lion went out with the actress into a wine restaurant. He liked actresses, and he was very glad that she accepted the invitation. He didn't come home, so they thought to





ask the police to look for him. They thought he was a suicide because he was unhappy about the play. Yet he didn't think any more about the whole thing. He was young and thought, "Oh, next time I'll make it better."

The next day in the best newspaper there was a critic, Hanns von Gumpenberg. "Von" is aristocratic, you know, and he was a very enlightened man. His family was older than the Wittelsbachs, the house of the king. He was the first critic of the Münchner Neusten Nachrichten paper. And he wrote a very nice critic about Lion, how gifted he was. You could see that through: "Although it was not very finished yet, the whole thing, and very amateurish, you could feel that he is very talented." So isn't that an amazing thing, that he could...? This man just helped him as long as he could, always liked his writing and praised it.

WESCHLER: Let's go back a little bit and take a look at how Lion began writing. What were his earliest...?

FEUCHTWANGER: One of the earliest printed things was a song about fishing. It was a competition for fishing. So he wrote a poem about fishing, and he got first prize. But he had never fished in his whole life. [laughter]

WESCHLER: How old was he at that point?

FEUCHTWANGER: Fourteen, I think.

WESCHLER: Was he writing earlier than that?



FEUCHTWANGER: No, it was about the time he began to write, but just for himself.

WESCHLER: Had he decided already very early that he would be a writer?

FEUCHTWANGER: I think so, yes. He never told me about it. He never spoke about it. But I think it was in him. He was obsessed with it.

WESCHLER: Well, presumably his career was not made by the fishing poem.

FEUCHTWANGER: No. [laughter]

WESCHLER: What followed that?

FEUCHTWANGER: I don't know anything. Very early he began to write critics about the theater for the very important periodical in Berlin, Schaubühne. That was like the Saturday Review here. It had great renommé.

WESCHLER: How did that contact come about?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, he just wrote a review and sent it in, and it was accepted.

WESCHLER: How old was he at that point?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, about twenty or so. It was very important because in Munich there were many first nights; many of the great playwrights in Germany had their first performances in Munich. So it was very important what he wrote. It was a very funny thing that he always felt so humiliated at home, and then all those famous authors made so



much fuss out of him so he would write a good critic.

WESCHLER: Hot and cold.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja. It was also not very healthy like that.

WESCHLER: Sure. Well, a little bit about Munich here: You mentioned that they had many premieres in Munich. So there apparently was an established and thriving theater there.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, there was the State Theatre, which was of course before the Royal Theatre, and then there was the Schauspielhaus, which was the avant-garde theater in those days. There were many, many first--for instance, I think every play of Frank Wedekind has been played the first time in Munich, in this Schauspielhaus. And also some Gerhart Hauptmann plays, and all the Max Halbe plays. Halbe was later on not so very well appreciated, but in those days he was one of the classics. His first play was Jugend (Youth). This first play made him famous. Later on there are funny things which we have to say about our experience during the war. Shall I speak about it now?

WESCHLER: Sure. These things are open.

FEUCHTWANGER: In Munich there was a wine restaurant. It was built exactly beside the Hofbraühaus, the famous Hofbraühaus, where the people stand around kegs and had



those big steins of beer. But always one liter, not less. They drank that--three, four, five liters a night. But beside it was a wine restaurant, the Torggelstube, and this wine restaurant was in two parts, divided in two parts. One was the bourgeois, and the other part was the--Bohemians, I would say. There were also writers, and also, for instance, a man like [Walter] Rathenau came there. He was the foreign minister. There were two tables where always the same man was at the head of the table. On one table was Frank Wedekind, the playwright, and at the other was Max Halbe. Everyone had his own friends, and they didn't like that someone from their table went to the other table. There was only one man who was allowed to do that, and they didn't take him very seriously. It was Erich Mühsam, who later has been killed by the Nazis. There is a famous story about him. He was also a very gifted writer. He was not a Communist; he was an anarchist. But he was the mildest person you can imagine, and that he was an anarchist, you couldn't.... You know that only Munich had these people. It was only in Munich. Like they say, "Only in America," but it was Munich. He was the only one who was accepted on both tables. He had also a little magazine. It was very gifted, what he wrote, but sometimes crazy, about how the world should look. It was called Kaïn, from Cain and Abel. He had a great red beard





and a very high voice. Later on he helped make the revolution in Munich. He was one of the founders of the revolution in Munich with [Kurt] Eisner. In Russia, he's still very famous, also because of his death. One of his best friends always told him, "You will end at the gallow." And this best friend really became a Nazi later. But it was not he, I think, who killed him. This man who later became a Nazi fell in love with me. He was a hero in the war and came back for furlough. He always kneeled before me and cried that I didn't accept him. He was a big man, strong and everything, and it just was so funny. Later he became a Gauleiter; that's a leader of the Nazis who killed many people.

WESCHLER: What was his name?

FEUCHTWANGER: [Bernhardt Köhler]

WESCHLER: He obviously wasn't making much of an impression on you.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja. You know, like Heine said, "His name shouldn't be mentioned." "Nicht genannt soll seiner werden." It should never even be mentioned, Heinrich Heine wrote that in his poems.

WESCHLER: Well, what happened at that winery? You were telling your story.

FEUCHTWANGER: At this winery we always were on the table of Frank Wedekind, who was more progressive; he was very



liberal and enlightened. Max Halbe was a very conservative man. Both were famous, and--it always changes a little bit. For a while, Frank Wedekind was even in jail for lèse majesté. He was very successful and also always very persecuted because he was so daring. Many of his plays have been prohibited. Then he was less played for a while, and all of a sudden he had a comeback, in Berlin, with a very famous actress, a woman who played the heroine in his plays. Usually his wife [Tilly] played, and he was unhappy with this Maria Orska. He said to my husband, "I cannot understand that this woman could perform my play. She is too much of a demoniac, a vamp. My heroines are in no way vamps; but they are vicious, childlike. She knows too much. She has nothing like a child." She had had such an enormous success, and he was so famous again, that he came back from Berlin radiant. He forgot all what he told us about Maria Orska.

Another time in the Torggelstube he met Max Halbe. They were always friends from their youth on--friends and enemies at the same time. And he said, "Max, I heard that you had a first night in the meantime when I was in Berlin. I was very sorry," he said, "I couldn't be here. Do you think they will perform your play again?" Things like that happened, you know. I heard that myself. [laughter]

WESCHLER: What a scene! Was that scene already there when



your husband was growing up in Munich?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, it was already like that.

WESCHLER: Was he part of that already from being a critic?

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja. From being a critic. He was famous, you could say, as a critic, in those days, and also very much feared. He was a very sharp critic. Later on he didn't like that; he always said, "You know, a critic can do very little [to help] somebody, but he can do the greatest damage." Much more damage than he could do help. So finally he gave up writing critics. He wrote only critics when he liked something, to promote something, some author or writer or actor.

WESCHLER: Do you feel partly responsible for this evolution?

FEUCHTWANGER: I think so, ja, ja. I am also responsible that he wrote novels, because he had been a playwright.



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WESCHLER: You were in the middle of a story about Wedekind.

FEUCHTWANGER: About Wedekind. What I wanted to say-- I have a lot of anecdotes about Wedekind, but what I think is important is that he was the predecessor of Bertolt Brecht. He had great influence on him. Bertolt Brecht never met him, but Wedekind's writing and his plays had great influence on him. Wedekind was often singing those songs from his plays, what also Brecht did. That I think is rather interesting to know.

WESCHLER: You might give some of your anecdotes as long as we're on him.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, his wife was very beautiful, and she was famous for her beautiful legs. He wrote plays where she could show her legs, because in those days the women had long skirts; you couldn't see their legs. That's why in his Der Erdgeist, she had to play a clown with short trousers, so you could see her legs. When she was sitting beside an actor, he was terribly jealous. He was much older than his wife, but she loved him very much. He thought--I don't know if you know the word, that touching the feet under the table? How would you say that? Footsie?





WESCHLER: Playing footsie, right.

FEUCHTWANGER: And he was afraid that she would do that with a famous actor. So he said, "Tilly, did you lose something?" and looked under the table. [laughter] And those things happened all the time.

I met Tilly again when I was in Germany, and she gave a party for me, a great party. She sent me also her memoirs [Lulu, die Rolle meines Lebens], with a beautiful dedication. Her daughter [Kadidja] visited me here. I brought her to the Huntington Hartford Foundation. She lived there in a little house, with a little river beside the house; she had a typewriter, paper, everything here. It was wonderful.

WESCHLER: Why don't we come back for a while to Lion's early literary career. At first, was it his intention to be a playwright?

FEUCHTWANGER: A playwright, yes. He was only interested in writing plays, not in writing epics. That's why he wrote the first time those three one-acts.

WESCHLER: And those were the very first things he wrote?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yeah, they were the first things, at least, which were performed.

WESCHLER: What came after that? Hopefully a little bit more successful.

FEUCHTWANGER: No, he wrote then a novel which he later on



negated entirely and didn't want that anyone would know about it.

WESCHLER: It was not published?

FEUCHTWANGER: It was published, but it was--I don't know what happened finally. I think he retracted it. He didn't like it.

WESCHLER: What was its name?

FEUCHTWANGER: I don't remember.

WESCHLER: I'm sure it's listed here [in the 1972 Collection of Critical Essays].

FEUCHTWANGER: He was very angry when somebody would [mention it].

WESCHLER: Was that Der tönerne Gott?

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja. I thought that nobody would know it. I forgot that it's in here.

WESCHLER: You've got it listed.

FEUCHTWANGER: Gott is God, you know, and tönerne is something like gypsum. You speak of tönerne feet.

WESCHLER: Clay, maybe.

FEUCHTWANGER: Clay, that's it. Ja, ja. The Clay God.

WESCHLER: Look, I'm going to give you this list here--it's the chronological listing of his works....

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, I made this myself, I know it well.

WESCHLER: Well, maybe just looking at the early works and listing them, you'll get some ideas, and you can tell



us some of the stories of the earliest things.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja. [reading] Joel, King Saul, Das Weib des Urias, Der arme Heinrich. Yes, but Prinzessin Hilde is not there. Something is already lacking. Donna Bianca, Die Braut von Korinth.

WESCHLER: Well, maybe you can tell us a little bit about those early plays. Are they published anywhere?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, never. He didn't allow it. But that is not all of it. We have nothing which could [establish a complete list]. Even Die Einsamen (Zwei Skizzen)--I never heard about them before. Somebody found it in Germany after the last world war [II]. And I don't know what it is: I never read it; I never saw it.

WESCHLER: So it's just a phantom title.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja. It was published under the name L. Feuchtwanger, so I thought maybe it could be somebody else. His brother was also L. Feuchtwanger. And his brother was already dead, so I couldn't ask him. I don't know if he ever wrote that.

WESCHLER: I see, I see.

FEUCHTWANGER: I never heard--he never spoke about it. But he told me about Prinzessin Hilde, which isn't even mentioned here. That is the play which I've told you about.

WESCHLER: Right, right.

FEUCHTWANGER: And Joel and King Saul. Yes, there was also



repetition in this play, you know. "Saul, you will die on the heights of"--I don't know, Gilboa or something like that. With always this refrain, all the time, ad nauseam.

WESCHLER: What was that play about?

FEUCHTWANGER: I think King Saul, but I don't know. If this is not right, we have no proof for it, because it was lost.

WESCHLER: You don't have any of those early manuscripts?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, I don't know of any. I also never have seen them. Because when I met Lion he already was--you know, he didn't want them to be remembered anymore.

Maybe it was King Saul and Princess Hilde--one act.

WESCHLER: What do you know about the other ones that are there? Anything else?

FEUCHTWANGER: The Fetish, a drama, I don't know if I ever read it.

WESCHLER: We're speaking here, by the way, of the commemorative volume on Feuchtwanger that was published in the USC [Studies in Comparative Literature Series].

FEUCHTWANGER: Among the other early works were some short stories.

WESCHLER: What were they about?

FEUCHTWANGER: There is a book called Centum Opuscula.

(They were printed there). That means One Hundred Small Works. But you wanted to know about his plays, or what do you want?





WESCHLER: Well, just generally his early literary career, how he began. He began as a playwright, you say.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, but he began more as a critic. During the time of the critic, he was also a playwright. The first real thing which has been performed was the Die Perser des Aischylos, which he adapted from the Greek.

WESCHLER: The Persians.

FEUCHTWANGER: But those are all in distichon, in hexameter and pentameter, so it was a new work. When you translate something like that in verses, you know, you have to write it as a new work. This has been performed and was a great success. It was right after the beginning of the First World War. It was the first performance in Munich.

WESCHLER: Okay, well, that's after he meets you. Maybe we should begin to get toward the point where he meets you. We've talked a little bit about actresses and so forth. Maybe you could tell us some stories about his earlier relations with women.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja. He wouldn't tell me all those things probably.

WESCHLER: He told you some, and no doubt you'll act as a further censor on the ones he told you, but maybe you can tell us some stories of that kind.

FEUCHTWANGER: I know that he had relations, but how far that went, I don't know.



WESCHLER: Well, how old was he when he met you?

FEUCHTWANGER: He was twenty-five.

WESCHLER: Do you recall his mentioning any particular friends that maybe were important?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, of course, but I don't know how far these relations went, you know. I just couldn't tell you. He knew all the famous actresses of the time-- Irene Triesch, for instance, in Berlin, but what shall I know about them? He was in Berlin studying there, you know, and then he knew the actresses there, too. He wrote critics, so he met everybody--Ida Roland, who later married Count [Richard] Coudenhove-Kalerge, of Pan-Europa. Ja, ja. But those names nobody would know.

WESCHLER: You mentioned Lion was in Berlin?

FEUCHTWANGER: He studied also in Berlin, ja.

WESCHLER: We'd better pick up on that.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, I wouldn't know that, you know; it was all before my time.

WESCHLER: Okay, when was it that he studied in Berlin?

FEUCHTWANGER: I think if you have read the biographical essay, you must know that.

WESCHLER: You don't have anything more beyond the standard biographical details?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, I don't.

WESCHLER: Okay. Well, why don't we talk a little bit about



how you and he got to know each other. One story that you told me the other day, which I think we should bring up right now, is the story about Henny's party.

FEUCHTWANGER: There were two sisters--I don't remember their name [Streb]. We had an excursion in the sport club, and one sister of those two girls said, "I cannot come because I'm invited to a party of Henny." Then the others said, "Oh, this Jewish bastard." And I jumped on her. She was about a head taller than I was, very broad with strong bones, but I threw her down. She was so surprised that I was kneeling on her and asking her, "Do you take it back?" Then she took it back. But in the fight, my coral necklace broke, and the pearls were all around. Afterwards, when the fight was over, we all looked together for the pearls, because we were more afraid of our parents than of each other.

WESCHLER: How old were you then, about?

FEUCHTWANGER: Twelve, maybe. No, I was older--fourteen.

WESCHLER: Several times you've told incidents where you knew of the Feuchtwanger family even as a child.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, I knew because I read only bad things about my husband. See, the newspaper didn't like him, although this one critic was very much for him. But when the newspaper heard anything about him, they immediately took the occasion to attack him. I never found out why, and



he never found out, but he was always attacked in the newspaper.

WESCHLER: In the Munich newspapers?

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja. He had ambitions to open literary events and founded a literary club [The Phoebus Club].

There he had famous writers coming, and he got one of the ministers of the government to be a protector. This helped him to get all the famous writers coming from Berlin and from everywhere to make lectures there. One of his friends [Livingston] was from a very rich and very noble family from Cologne, on the Rhine. He was interested in literature, but also he was kind of a Bohemian in a sophisticated way; he was rich but still like a Bohemian. He was editor of this--my husband also founded a literary magazine [Der Spiegel: Münchner Halbmonatsschrift für Literatur, Musik und Bühne] along with this literary club. Once, I think it was a critic of Berlin, Alfred Kerr, who came to lecture, and my husband had to pick him up at the station with a taxi. And this very aristocratic young man, with a very elegant suit and a monocle, ran after the taxi, behind the taxi, and shouted, "Boss, Boss, I am hungry, I am starving!" [laughter] Those things happened all the time. Of course, all those things came out in the newspaper. My husband was absolutely innocent about that. He didn't know beforehand.





Then came an entrepreneur to my husband and told him, "You have this literary circle, and I think you should make a big affair, a big ball, with performances and so. It is very good that I can do that. It would be a great advantage for myself"--he was also, I think, a contractor or something--"it would be a good advertising if I can make that with your name." Because the name was a very good name in Munich, not from my husband but from the factory. So he said, "You have nothing to do. You just give your name, and I make the whole affair as an advertisement for my business." So he did that, and they rented a very big hall and everything was very expensive and decorated by the greatest artists in Munich. There came the most elegant people; the aristocracy, the ministers, the professors, and everybody arrived. And all of a sudden came the workmen, and they tore down all the decorations. It was a big scandal, and it was just--people ran away; there was a fight and everything. Also the family of my husband was there, of course. It was that this entrepreneur was a swindler and he didn't pay his workmen.

WESCHLER: What was his name? Do you know?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, I never knew [Herr Huber]. I didn't know my husband then, you know. It was in the newspaper. I read it in the newspaper: "He didn't pay his workmen." It said that Feuchtwanger had to pay that, that then they



tore down the decorations because they didn't get paid. The minister--von Crailsheim was his name--left, of course, in his equipage, two horses, and lackeys. It was a terrible scandal. The Phoebus scandal, it was called. (Phoebus was the title of the circle, you know, the literary circle.) And my husband was absolutely innocent.

WESCHLER: It was just his name that was being used.

FEUCHTWANGER: Just his name. Lion didn't know that [Huber] was a swindler. Then, of course, there was a big trial as to who'd pay for all that--the hall which has been rented, and the workmen, and so. And my husband's father had to pay everything, because they didn't want the scandal. Those workmen were not paid and so, although my husband had nothing to do with the whole thing.... Later on, this entrepreneur wanted to shoot my husband. My husband was hidden in his office, and his friend, this man from the Rhineland, was outside. He was very courageous and shooed him away. At the trial this man said, "I was standing there working, until the blood stood in my feet." His whole behavior was impressing. The parents of my husband were afraid of the scandal and paid for everything. Later on he heard that, I think, at every meal where they were sitting together; he had to hear that. They always reproached him.

WESCHLER: I imagine. It was not the kind of thing that was



ideally suited to improve relations.

FEUCHTWANGER: Also the sisters and brothers said, "That's from our money, too," and things like that. There was another friend, Monheimer, the one who studied art and voice--he was also of a very rich family--and they paid also because he was a friend of my husband's and they, too, had this promise from this entrepreneur. So they paid half of it. But Monheimer didn't suffer. My husband always had to suffer. Also they said, "This will be taken off from your inheritance, this money." That's why he couldn't stand it anymore. Finally everything came out, and this entrepreneur had to go to jail. It was found out that he was a crook and swindled also my husband.' He used him, just his name, because his own name was already known as a swindler. And he had to go to jail. But my husband said that for a long time he always had threatened to shoot him.

WESCHLER: This was all before you met him.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja. But you could read it in the newspapers. His fame was only that of the terrible event of the Phoebus scandal.

WESCHLER: So you're gradually hearing more and more about him?

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja. I only heard bad things, and I was very curious about him.



WESCHLER: Well, why don't you tell us the circumstances of how you met him?

FEUCHTWANGER: When he was away from his parents, his mother from time to time--maybe twice a year--came to his little attic room and asked him if he needs something--she brought him some underwear or so--and if he wouldn't come someday, for instance, on the holidays, to eat with them. They lived very near to where he was living. So sometimes my husband went there, but it was always not very friendly, and it was uncomfortable. One day his sister met him on the street and said, "You know, I have a big party with music, a house ball with an orchestra and all that, and I've invited a friend of mine, Marta Loeffler. Maybe you would like to meet her." She liked me very much.

WESCHLER: How had you two met?

FEUCHTWANGER: I met her through another friend, whom I liked very much. Pauline Feust was her name. She introduced me to Franziska. And then I came sometimes to the family; I was invited for tea. And there was a--ach! The stories that were there! Another girl, who was very ambitious and who had very little money, came to my father's shop to buy some lingerie, and she didn't pay. My father wanted to sue her. I said, "Don't do it. It's not worthwhile. She's a poor girl, and she wants to go along in life. So don't sue her." So he didn't sue her. But she hated me, because.... The Feuchtwangers were always kind of--attracted her. She wanted to marry





one of the sons. So she asked one of the brothers of my husband--Fritz, the one who took over the factory--that he should invite her. She came and she said something against me--she didn't even know me--that I was a girl who was with every man, or something like that. Fritz was so angry, because he knew me--he courted me himself and knew that I was really very cool against men and hard to get--and he threw her out. Just threw her out. Later on she married another Feuchtwanger.

WESCHLER: So she got her Feuchtwanger after all.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, but I couldn't say more than that. There are so many Feuchtwangers that that's all what I would tell about her. Anyway, that was her gratefulness, that I saved her from my father's trial and then she did something like that. I and my husband, we had always those experiences. When we did something for somebody, then they did something against us.

WESCHLER: So apparently you were going to these teas before the party. You had met the other brothers and so forth.

FEUCHTWANGER: Not many, not all. One wasn't there. He was in the north, in Prussia, in Halle. They were not always at home; they had their own lives.

WESCHLER: But you were gradually meeting the family.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja, because Franziska wanted me to meet



her parents also. I don't know why; she liked me very much. We did a lot of sport together. We were swimming together, and also ice skating with [Emanuel] Lasker, who was a famous chess player later. Also athletics and things like that we did together. That was the only way; we had nothing much in common. She was also gifted; she played piano and painted a little bit, but it was all a little amateurish and superficial, but she was good-natured.

WESCHLER: Did she talk about her brother at all?

FEUCHTWANGER: She only said that her brother Lion isn't nice, that only Lutschi is nice. When they want to know anything, they go to Lutschi, but not to Lion.

WESCHLER: But were you curious?

FEUCHTWANGER: Well, she asked me to come to this party, of course; and then when she met her brother, she said he should come. He said, "Oh, those teenagers, that's always so boring." He didn't know me, you know. But then finally he came with his friend Hartmann Trepka, this musician. He was the first violinist in the opera, in the orchestra. When I came in, my husband was already there. Franziska introduced us, and he said, "Oh, I don't like you." Lion said that. "I know you and don't like you." I said, "How do you know me, and why don't you like me?" Then he said, "I saw you at the exhibition when there was a promenade concert." The young people always made promenades



there, and I was with my parents. The young students promenaded on the other side and made eyes to the girls--that was all. And his friend Hartmann Trepka, the musician, was absolutely--what shall I say?--fascinated by me. I don't know--I have not seen it--I didn't know it. All the whole evening, he went up and down during the concert and forcing Lion to come with him, always behind me. And Lion was not interested in me. He was interested not in girls with good families or so; he was interested in actresses. So he was very angry that he always had to go behind me all the time, and so he found me very unsympathetic from the beginning. Also he said, "And I don't like black hair; I like only blonde hair." So I said, "I'm sorry, but I keep my black hair." So he found me very ironical, and I found him very unpleasant. Then he began to speak with me and said, "Don't you think it's very boring here? There's all those teenagers hopping around." I said, "No, I don't think so." "I think we should go away, we three--Hartmann Trepka, you and I. We should go to a wine restaurant." I was shocked that something--just to mention something to me like that.

WESCHLER: How old were you at this point?

FEUCHTWANGER: Seventeen or eighteen. I was not yet eighteen. I was shocked, and I said, "How can I do that? I never go in a restaurant with a man without my parents." So he said,



"Oh, you are bourgeois." And this challenged me. I said, "All right, I go with you." So we went to a wine restaurant, and he ordered....

WESCHLER: This was on your very first date.

FEUCHTWANGER: First date. [laughter] No, I had had dates before.

WESCHLER: But not with him.

FEUCHTWANGER: Daytime. Not in the evening. Not in a restaurant. On the street. I mean, when I was at the lectures, there were always some students waiting for me when I came out. Also the brother Fritz was always there. So I went with them, and he ordered wine, and then the musician took my hand and began to kiss it, what I didn't like very much. He began to kiss up the arm. I was in a ball robe. So I jumped up and said, "You don't protect me against your friend?" Anyway I jumped up and ran away. My husband had just time to pay, and then they ran after me. They couldn't catch me--it was about fifteen minutes, or twenty minutes. I ran home, and they couldn't catch me.

WESCHLER: Were you very upset?

FEUCHTWANGER: I was upset because you don't do something like that.

Then my husband found out when my birthday was--I was not far from, I think, my eighteenth birthday--and he sent





me some violets. Later on, he told me how he could afford the violets, because they were very expensive. They were called Parma violets and came from Parma, Italy. In those days--it was in winter; my birthday's in January--it was very expensive to get violets from Italy. He had no money, so he wrote a poem about me, and it was printed in the Jugend. It was a famous magazine, which was made up mostly of beautiful drawings, poems, and witticisms. Jokes, witticisms, things like that. We don't have anything like that here. It was very famous. Thomas Mann wrote for it, and Wedekind, and so. And they accepted this poem, which was about me. He called me Gabler in this poem, and he spoke about me that I am very good looking but not very bright--or something like that--because I ran away, you know. The money he got for this poem, he spent on violets.

WESCHLER: Had you read the poem?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, yes, I read it.

WESCHLER: Did you read it at that time, already?

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja, because it was in this magazine. I always read this magazine. Gabler: you know, Loeffler has something to do with spoon, and Gabler is the fork. Gabler sounds very near, but it was not the same word. But immediately everybody knew that. Of course, I was meant.

WESCHLER: Only after having seen you one time, he was doing that already?



FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja. [laughter]

WESCHLER: Okay, well, here come these violets to your house. What do you make of them?

FEUCHTWANGER: The violets came, and I called him--no, I wrote a line--and I thanked him. He was away then. He had made a trip or so to Italy, I don't know what. And I didn't meet him again until the fall. Then he called me and sent me flowers again, and so. We made an excursion in the neighborhood, the outskirts of Munich, and we were sitting there, under a tree in the daytime. There was nothing happened. Of course, we kissed, but it was--I didn't have many kisses before. And then there followed what you have read.

WESCHLER: Well, I've read the notes, but we'll begin to talk about them now. It doesn't sound as though, outside of a certain gaminess about it, that it was a difficult courtship. You two seem to get along.

FEUCHTWANGER: It was not difficult.

WESCHLER: You got along very well right away.

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, yes. Ja, ja. He took me once also to the Torggelstube. I had pretended that I was--I got a ticket for the theatre. No--I went to the theatre. I was always brought--the maid always came with me to the theatre and also picked me up. But I left the theatre very early, and we went together to the Torggelstube, where I met



Wedekind and all those people, already before we were married. It was a great event for me, and they were very nice to me. Very. They liked everything what was unusual, and they felt that I was not fitting in. They were nicer to me than to anybody else, you know, so full of respect and veneration, I would say.

WESCHLER: How did your family take the attentions of Lion?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, my mother was rather tickled--she didn't know what happened on our dates--because he was from such a great family, and my family was not so great. But when they heard about it, my father took it very hard. My mother was--in a way, I never thought that she would act like that: she went to Lion, and they went along very well. She admired him enormously.

WESCHLER: Was your courtship in secret for a long time, or was it pretty open?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, it was a secret. Until it was no secret anymore. [laughter]

WESCHLER: Maybe we should stop now and tell that whole story from the beginning next time.

JUNE 24, 1975

WESCHLER: Today, before we go on talking about your courtship, we've agreed that first of all we're going to



have some corrections from the last session, and then we are going to talk a bit about the ambience of Munich, just the scene in Munich, and particularly about Max Reinhardt and some other characters.

First, though, there were three corrections in particular that you wanted to mention. You had remembered the name of Henny's friends?

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja. Streb, but I don't remember the first names. Dr. Streb was the father. He was a fascist, what you would call now a fascist. The daughters liked the family Feuchtwanger, and the whole kind of life there, and particularly the humanity. For instance, they had always somebody eating with them. A poor person was always eating with them. That also had something to do with orthodoxy. [The Streb girls] liked this kind, and they were very happy to be always there. That's why there was this quarrel between the two sisters, when one said she cannot go with us on the excursion of the gymnastic club, and the other said, "Are you going to your Jewish bastard?"

WESCHLER: We decided that the word was "bastard" and not "swine," which you first said.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja.

WESCHLER: Now, they were Jewish themselves?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, no, no, no. Fascistic Gentile people





and very, very Aryan--I suppose you'd call them--big and blonde and blue eyes, and very violent. Germanic. But they liked the atmosphere of this Orthodox family.

WESCHLER: Secondly, you wanted to mention the correct title of the magazine...

FEUCHTWANGER: ...was Die Jugend.

WESCHLER: This is the magazine in which the poem that Lion wrote about you appeared.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja. It was a little like Collier's here, with little short stories, and little poems, and jokes, and things like that.

WESCHLER: You had mentioned about the Ibsen thing?

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, once the cover was [a drawing of] Ibsen running over a lawn with two little young girls, without any respect for authority.

WESCHLER: Being irreverent.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja, irreverent, because also Ibsen had new ideas about love and all those things, you know, that was very new in those times and very avant-garde; and young girls were not allowed to go into his place.

WESCHLER: And this was a popular magazine in Munich.

FEUCHTWANGER: Very popular, yes. Very popular, ja, ja.



WESCHLER: Okay. Thirdly, you wanted to tell us how, after the flop of the play, one of his relatives did something.

FEUCHTWANGER: One of the relatives came to his parents and said Lion should change his name and adopt another name, because it was a shame for the family that he's always mentioned so unfavorably in the newspapers.

WESCHLER: How did Lion respond to that?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, he laughed. [laughter] But he hated this man from then on. He never said it, but I had the feeling. Every time when we saw this man, you could see it on his face.

WESCHLER: What relative was this, do you remember?

FEUCHTWANGER: He was a rather--not a very near relative. A cousin, or second cousin, or something like that [Felix Feuchtwanger].

WESCHLER: Well, right now, I'd like to talk a little bit about Munich. The more we talk about it--just now talking before the tape was turned on--it really becomes a very exciting and dynamic place. One way to get at that is to talk a little bit about your husband's earliest relationship with Max Reinhardt. As you were just saying, this story begins with the theater that was started....

FEUCHTWANGER: The new [Künstler]-Theatre, yes. There



was a new theatre, but that was before Reinhardt. It was founded in a new building in the Exposition Park, where, I mentioned to you, my husband first saw me. This foundation was rather reactionary with lots of money behind, and very lightly anti-Semitic. You couldn't prove it, but the way they made the engagements of actors, and also their program, and all that.... Most of all, it was old-fashioned, and it was not worthwhile to build a new theatre for it. With so much money. So my husband had been asked about his opinion, in a literary circle, and he spoke there.

WESCHLER: This is what year?

FEUCHTWANGER: Nineteen hundred and eight. And he spoke there, and he spoke what he truly felt, although he knew that the crown prince [Ruprecht] was a patron of this theatre. And when he spoke, he quoted a verse of Goethe, which means roughly, "If you'll just praise everything which is bad, then you'll immediately get your reward; you're swimming in the swamp of nobody, and those who protect you are the protectors of the nobodies." I have to find a better translation.

WESCHLER: Do you have the German there? You might read it.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja:

Das Schlechte magst du immer loben,



Du hast davon auch gleich den Lohn.  
In deinem Pfuhe schwimmst du oben  
Und bist der Pfuscher Schutzpatron.

WESCHLER: So he had given that verse.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, and then the moment he began this verse, all of a sudden, he saw before him, sitting in the first row, the Crown Prince Ruprecht. He was not prepared, and he was very dependent on his manuscript: he just couldn't stop, and the whole quotation came out. He was terribly embarrassed; he began always to sweat on his upper lip when he was embarrassed. He took out his handkerchief and dried himself, and everybody could feel his embarrassment. But after that, when it was over, the crown prince came up to him and told him, "If I had known the way this theatre is planned, I would never have accepted the protectorate." And then, it didn't last very long. They tried and it was one failure after the other. Then they asked Reinhardt from Berlin to take over the theater. This was the beginning of an entirely new conception of theater in Munich.

WESCHLER: Was Reinhardt already very famous in Berlin?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, yes, he was very famous. But he was not known in Munich, except when people from Munich went to Berlin. But he was very famous; all the newspapers wrote about him. He had all the great people who were part of his plans, his program. In Salzburg, for instance,





he directed [Count Karl Vollmoeller's Das Mirakel] with Lady Diana Manners as the Madonna. He made also those famous Salzburg festivals. So he was really a very famous man, except that he never made money, because he was not calculating; he just had his big plans. If it were not for his brother, who was a little more down to earth, the first day, he would have made bankrupt, or something.

And the first thing what he performed in this theater was La Belle Hélène by Offenbach. I was there with my husband. We were not married, but he invited me there. Oh, I was so excited. I made myself a beautiful evening dress with a long train. Everybody looked at me. I was the only one with a train. I had a big hat with a long pleureuse, it was called, and ostrich feathers way down. On one side there was a large bang, and on the other side was a big feather. Lion liked it very much; he was very proud. But I think it was rather ridiculous. [laughter] Everybody looked at me, and everybody thought I am an actress from abroad, you know. And I was just the daughter of a merchant.

But anyway, most important was the performance: Reinhardt had brought in very witty people from Vienna, who were great writers themselves, just to make the jokes, because it was renovated from the old operetta, which was rather old. And they made very actual jokes which had



something to do with the....

WESCHLER: Contemporary or timely.

FEUCHTWANGER: Contemporary. Ja, ja. So, for instance, our kaiser in those days made lots of speeches; he was known as "the speaking kaiser." That's why it was a kind of remembrance of the kaiser when Calchas, who was the priest in La Belle Hélène.... When they decide to go to Troya, for the war, because Paris has kidnapped Hélène, Calchas began with the war speech by banging the big gong and telling loudly that without tin you have no mass following. [This is a play on the German word Blech, "tin" or "sheet iron" and also "nonsense."--Ed.] Everybody understood what was meant, of course. But the most interesting thing was La Belle Hélène, the Beautiful Helen, herself: she was the famous singer, Maria Jeritza. She was a world-known singer, very beautiful. She came over from Vienna, and later on she sang also in the Metropolitan Opera. She was the most famous singer of her time. She was very young still, then. It was never before known that a real opera singer would sing an operetta. But Reinhardt could do everything. He was a magician. And he could persuade her to come to Munich and take the role of La Belle Hélène, and she was.... And then she has this love scene with Paris. She was lying on a golden bed, like the Roman beds you see in Pompeii, and when she began



to be excited about Paris, she stood up on top of the bed. And it was the greatest sensation. She had nothing on but a golden net that was her shirt. And she was a sensation. She was so beautiful--golden hair, which was natural blonde, and her golden voice, and everything--that nobody really found anything immoral in it. But it was absolutely unheard of. Then she sang, "Since it was only a dream," and it was very exciting, this scene. Then, when they decided to go to war, there was a younger woman [played by Camilla Eibenschütz] who was very gay and very lively, and she sang "On to Kreta, on to Kreta, on to Kreta! To the Kretins!" She played Ganymed. It was a march melody, and everybody in the audience also sang with it. It was a great excitement. She began to march around the stage and all. And during the singing, there was a big statue of Venus--she was so big that you could only see her legs, nothing else--and this statue began to dance also, the march. It was the greatest sensation I ever had.



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JUNE 24, 1975

WESCHLER: We're in the middle of the story of this wonderful performance of Reinhardt's version of Offenbach's La Belle Hélène.

FEUCHTWANGER: Lion wrote a review in the Berlin Schaubühne; that was the theatre magazine there--the periodical, you would call it, like the Saturday Review here. And then he met Reinhardt several times, also of course in the Torggelstube--I think we spoke about the Torggelstube....

WESCHLER: This was the wine restaurant.

FEUCHTWANGER: The wine restaurant, yes. Reinhardt came there, too, and Jeritza came, and all of the big actors.

On good days, everyone went to the Starnberger See; that is a lake near Munich, the lake of Starnberg, There was a wave in the lake....

WESCHLER: Now, we were talking about this before off tape. This was an artificially produced wave.

FEUCHTWANGER: It was artificially produced waves, ja. It was absolutely new, and nowhere else; that has been found. And they met there. There was a café, a Kaffeehaus around--in the open, of course--and everybody met there. Also they could eat the famous fish of the Starnberg





lake. They were Felchen, they were called, a kind of trout but a little bigger. And there they flirted, the big minds of Austria, mostly, and of Berlin. Everybody was there in summer coming to Munich. It was really a kind of center for artists and writers. The funny thing was that not one, except for my husband, was from Munich itself.

WESCHLER: Who were some of the others who came?

FEUCHTWANGER: Rössler and [Franz] Marc. Karl Rössler from Vienna and Roda Roda, who wrote a very interesting autobiography. Once he sent out notices that he has decided to live in illegitimate marriage with the Countess of Zeppelin; he gave also a big party for this event. That was the kind of mind you could find there. Also one man [Dr. Victor Mannheimer]--a very big merchant who owned a great department store in Berlin, but who lived in Munich on a big estate, with a great park, where there were deer around, and a beautiful library, and works of art--he sent out invitations to say that "there is no stress on moral inside, but more on amoral outside."

WESCHLER: What was the German of that?

FEUCHTWANGER: "Es wird mehr Wert gelegt auf ein anständiges Ausseres als auf anständiges Inneres." "Undecent exterior is more appreciated than decent interior." So that meant there would be not many dresses, you know. It was a great saving of material.



WESCHLER: Well, it begins to sound as if Munich was a very exciting place.

FEUCHTWANGER: It was exciting. All the artists, all the great painters came, and some of the painters lived there. Except for [Franz von] Lenbach, who was the son of a mason, and was from a little town in North Bavaria, all of them were from other parts of the German-speaking....

WESCHLER: Why did they come to Munich?

FEUCHTWANGER: First of all, it was the environment. There was this beautiful Isar Valley, the river there; and there were the mountains, the high mountains, the Alps, and the lakes around. And also the whole ambiente and atmosphere of Munich itself. They liked living in it, people drinking beer and not caring much and not being very materialistic.

WESCHLER: Not commercial.

FEUCHTWANGER: Not very commercial, ja.

WESCHLER: What was the general response of the population of Munich to this great...?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, they were good minded--what do you call it?--good natured. They had fun with it, but a little contempt also. "Not serious people."

WESCHLER: But these were, after all, some of the great artists of the coming years.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, but you know, they had not much sense



for great art or great literature. They liked people who made fun and had big balls, and they didn't mind.

Also, there were those big fraternities there, the students who had colors. Color-carrying students, I think they were called, with their hats of different colors. They had big duels there, some rather dangerous duels, with a kind of florett ["foil"] and sword and all that. They were usually drunk, because it was part of their initiation--but they had the initiation every day. They shouted loud in the streets and threw stones at the lanterns so the light went out. They also sometimes beat up the guards, and nobody ever did anything to them because they were the rich sons of the rich fathers of the great industrial--from the Rhineland, and so. And they brought money to Munich.

WESCHLER: And there in the middle of this whole scene were you, the daughter of a merchant, as you call yourself.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, yes.

WESCHLER: It must have really been very exciting for you.

FEUCHTWANGER: It was, yes, and I saw all that. We lived in the middle of the town, and we saw those drunken students, and all those beatings, and the fun-loving. And the carnival, you know, the Fasching: first of all, it was something religious; it was during the time between



the first of January and Easter (Mardi Gras). Carnival comes from carne vale; that's Latin; it means you cannot eat meat. That was in the olden days, in the ancient days, already; there was always dancing and making fun during this time. I don't know why, but anyway it was very nice.

WESCHLER: And you took it to great lengths in Munich.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes. Ja, and the masked balls were famous because they were very artistic. The artists themselves made the decorations. Everything was cheap; I mean, not cheap in bad taste, but it didn't cost much money because they did all of it themselves. At the same time, it brought much money to the town because many people came to see all that. At first they were a little stiff and reticent and all that, but it was contagious, the whole atmosphere there. Everybody took part in it, and later you couldn't find any more difference between the Prussians and the Bavarians.

WESCHLER: What was the population of Munich at that time?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, about half a million, maybe--if it was that much.

WESCHLER: Now, I wanted to ask you a few questions about Lion before we proceed on to your courtship in more detail. First of all, we haven't really talked about what his early politics were.





FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, he had only contempt of politics. It was things that had been done by the higher-uppers in the government, and it was usually very bad, and you couldn't do anything about it. In those days, during the kaiser, you couldn't speak out politically, or you went to jail. But this was not the case alone; it was just not done. The politicians were people who were considered not worthwhile. Except there was a man with the name of Harden who was in Berlin, and he brought out a big trial because one of the friends of the kaiser was homosexual, a Count [Philipp Fürst zu] Eulenburg. He denied it. Because he was a count, he thought he could deny everything. Then Harden found out that he was in Bavaria and had lovers among the peasants, among good-looking young peasants. They found one who spoke out who was too stupid to deny anything. Then this poor count had to go to jail for perjury. Everybody disliked the whole thing very much, but Maximilian Harden--he was a great columnist, and he also published a magazine called Die Zukunft ("The Future")--he took this whole thing very seriously. He said that Count Eulenburg was part of the Kamerrilla, the round table around the emperor, and that they had a bad influence, mostly for war. In a way he was right. But just this count Eulenburg was a very aesthetic man who wouldn't think about war, or so. He was a good man, in a way. And he was the victim of



the whole thing, which maybe was necessary because the kaiser was really known to be a menace for the peace of the world in those days.

WESCHLER: Roughly, what year was that?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, the trial was, I think, in 1910 or so. I think that could be looked up. It was a famous trial. [1906-1909]

WESCHLER: Was there any really viable socialist movement in Munich?

FEUCHTWANGER: Not in Munich. Not at all, no. We heard about it. They were called "The Reds." Socialists in those days were much nearer to communism than socialism was later on. Now, socialism is the greatest enemy of communism. But in those days there were no communists; there were only socialists. I remember that one man in Mannheim was the leader of the socialists. He was also a delegate of the government, a member of Parliament. They were always called the "Vaterlandslose Gesellen." The emperor called them that: "the boys (guys) without fatherland." But this man--his name was Ludwig Frank--was one of the first to die during the war. He was a volunteer and died during the war against the French. So he was not a man without country, but rather he was a real hero. I once asked one of my cousins, who was from Mannheim and who was a little more literate than most of the other cousins



who came to see us, and he told me that this man Frank was a Jew and that the only way [for a Jew] into politics was to go with the socialists. There was no way for a Jew to have anything to do with politics, except when you were a socialist. But I don't think this was the reason for this man Frank, because he really was an idealist. And it proved it that he died for his fatherland.

WESCHLER: Did you yourself know any Jewish socialists?

FEUCHTWANGER: I knew only Mühsam, but that was later, during the war--Erich Mühsam. He considered himself not a socialist, not even a communist; he was an anarchist, but he was the mildest person you can imagine. He couldn't kill a fly. And nobody could ever understand why he was an anarchist. But he was. He published a little magazine, and in very intelligent arguments he defended anarchists.

WESCHLER: Is this the man who could go to both tables at the wine restaurant?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, that's the one. And he also was later killed and terribly tortured by the Nazis.

WESCHLER: Generally, to recapitulate then, what was Lion's attitude towards the socialists who were around?

FEUCHTWANGER: He was not interested in socialism. Also he was an aristocrat in the arts. He considered politics something below his dignity.

WESCHLER: This is again an influence of Oscar Wilde.



FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, Oscar Wilde, and the whole literature in those days--Hoffmannsthal.

WESCHLER: Art for art's sake.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja. Art for art's sake.

WESCHLER: This, of course, is gradually going to change in his life.

FEUCHTWANGER: It has changed with the First World War, yes.

WESCHLER: Okay, we'll catch it again at that point. I also wanted you to describe his lodging, where he lived, when you first met him.

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, it was just terrible. He lived in a small street, on the top in the attic. When you went into the house there was an inn, a very low inn, and it smelled of beer and urine. That was terrible. Then you had to go up these very steep stairs. But every step up, more advanced, the air became clearer--cleaner. And he lived there. And why he found only this quarter was that in those days it was not allowed to have visits of ladies for a man who rented a room in an apartment. A roomer, I think it's called, ja. But this room had a special entry. It was between two apartments, one apartment to the left, one on the right; and in the middle there was only one room--maybe it was considered a storeroom or something like that--and this room he could rent. They have a special name, those





rooms. I don't remember now, but I think we'll find out again [Sturmfrei]. But those rooms--everybody could rent such a room and have visitors, any kind he wanted. And there he had a little room with a small window and no water. To get water to wash himself, he had to get it from the apartment to the right; the owner of this apartment was a court lackey, very anti-Semitic, who disapproved of the whole life of my husband very much. But it was in the contract with the landlady that he had to allow people who rented this room to get some water from him.

WESCHLER: So it sounds like a rather dark and dingy place.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, but the room itself was light and had much light and sun through the attic window. You could see over the roofs.

WESCHLER: How did you react when first going there? Were you shocked?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, I found it very exciting. [laughter]

WESCHLER: I mean, were you shocked that he was living in such quarters?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, on the contrary, I found it exciting. I found it daring to do such a thing--to be independent.

WESCHLER: And his living there had to do with the fact that he couldn't stand being Orthodox.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja. And also now to be independent, of



course.

WESCHLER: How long had he been living there?

FEUCHTWANGER: Later on, because he thought it was not a good house for me to come in, he rented another room.

It was near a very old castle, a big, famous, old castle with inside a big courtyard. It was from the Gothic times. There were two big arches, entrances, and near the second entrance there was a house which was leaning against the old castle--also a very old house. And there he found a room on the first floor. But you had to go around the house through an old arch, and it was very dark there. In the arch was the entrance to his room. The room was leased by a waitress of the Torggelstube. And there, of course, they knew him, and he could do what he wanted. Sometimes he couldn't pay his rent, because he went out of money, and she let him stay also, without pay for a while. One evening he was standing at the window, looking down on the street, and there was drunk man below. Under his room was a little store, and the owner had the name of Wollenweber--that means "wool weaver." This was in big letters above the little store, the name of Wollenweber, and this drunk man took down his hat and said, "Good evening, Mr. Wool Weaver," with big bows to my husband. [laughter] Across the street, there were windows, and there was a little tablet on the wall, and it said that Mozart composed the



opera Idomeneo there. That was just across the street, also on the first floor. It was all very old and with many corners. The street was not straight; it made many corners and went directly to the middle of the city to the Marienplatz, the place.

WESCHLER: What was the name of the street, do you remember?

FEUCHTWANGER: Burgstrasse. Burg--that is to say, the castle.

WESCHLER: What was the name of the street that he was first on?

FEUCHTWANGER: Gewürzmühlstrasse. [laughter]

WESCHLER: You pass your test.

FEUCHTWANGER: Gewürzmühl means mill of condiments, like pepper and spices. Probably before, in the medieval times, there were people who milled the condiments.

WESCHLER: Now at that time, did he have a library yet?

FEUCHTWANGER: He had two books, or three. [laughter]

WESCHLER: So that had not yet started.

FEUCHTWANGER: There was no room in those. His second apartment was still the State Library.

WESCHLER: So he was there a lot, at the State Library?

FEUCHTWANGER: All the time, ja, ja. When he wasn't at home, he was there.

WESCHLER: And what was he making his money on at that time? Was it just his reviews?

FEUCHTWANGER: First, in the beginning, he gave lessons



for retarded children, or for [students] before they had to make the examination. But he was not a good teacher. He was not patient enough. And he hated that: it was a loss of time, he thought. He would rather have written, so he gave it up. And then he began to write critics, reviews.

WESCHLER: And he was able to live on that?

FEUCHTWANGER: Not very well, but he tried. Also then he wrote a novel, and he got an advance. Later he was much ashamed of this novel. He didn't write it for making money, but he didn't know better.

WESCHLER: Der tönernerne Gott?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, that was it. And he got an advance for that. But this was a very bad deal, because later he had to give back the advance and even more than that. It was a suit. The man made Lion sign something which was very much against his own interests, but he didn't understand it. And the man who had this publishing house was a very wily man, and so he [Lion] lost the trial and had to pay back. He always went to one of his uncles, or his father also, and borrowed money and said he would give it back, of course. Then he tried to win it back. He went into a coffee house, the Prinzregenten café, and he played poker, or whatever it was, and always lost. He always thought that he would win the money he owed to other people. So he had always to borrow from one





person to pay his debts to another one.

Once we decided that we would make a little trip to Italy, to Venice. I would say it was a trip from my sports club, my gymnastics club.

WESCHLER: How long had you known each other at this point?

FEUCHTWANGER: It was always about the same time, because it was only a year afterwards that we married. Ja, and we were ready to go to this trip. I had already packed and left a note behind--I didn't ask my parents for permission because I was sure they wouldn't give it to me. I said, "I go with the club to make an excursion." We had an appointment at this café, and I was there with my little valise. Then my husband came out after a while and said he lost everything. So I had to go home again with my little bag. [laughter]

And it was always this friend who cheated with the cards. He cheated also with another man, who was a very rich agent. But the other man didn't cheat my husband; he cheated people who were richer, so it would be worthwhile. And this man, this friend of my husband--Hartmann, who always cheated my husband--first he got his golden watch and then.... When the agent was playing he always said, "Mr. Frankfurter, did you lose a card?" [laughter]

WESCHLER: And he would reach down and get a new one.



FEUCHTWANGER: Ja. It was just a comedy. And my husband always thought he could win. His friends told me that they could see on his face when he had good cards or bad cards. It was easy--he never could lie. He never could say a lie. You could see it immediately on his nose when he lied, I always said. So also he could not change his face; when he was pleased, he looked pleased.

WESCHLER: You might want to tell us some more stories of your courtship days before your marriage. Any memories you might have?

FEUCHTWANGER: I wouldn't say. I think we've already said enough.

WESCHLER: Well, then let us pick up with the way you phrased it yourself: that the engagement had been a secret one until it could no longer be kept secret. We might start there.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja. And then my husband told me I should ask my mother to come to his room, because he wanted to speak to her.

WESCHLER: How long had you known each other at this point?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, don't ask me those questions! I never knew how long--it must have been a year and a half or something. But I wouldn't know the dates; I'm not very strong at dates. And my mother came; she was rather flattered that he wanted to speak with her. But of course, the news



was not very pleasant. I wasn't there, but he must have done it in a way that it was very--she was rather pleased. At first it was a great shock, but also she was pleased with this man. She liked him immediately, and they went along very well.

WESCHLER: This was the first time she'd met him?

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja. She only saw him once [previously] when he was a little boy at the hand of his mother. She said that he was very kind to her. She also said that they wanted to give me a dowry, but he didn't want any part of it. He doesn't marry me for the money; and if there is money, it should be only in my name--he doesn't want any part of it. And this, of course, was very impressing. Then there was another thing: then my father-in-law, my future father-in-law, when he heard that my husband wanted to marry me, he went to my father and said, "I heard that your daughter wants to marry my son. I only can tell you my son is a bum, and if she wants to marry him, she is nothing better." [laughter] That was the blessing.

WESCHLER: How did your father react?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, he reacted very much. First of all, there was a very big dowry for me in the future. My mother insisted--I was the only child--that I would make a good parti, as they called it, a good marriage.



She wanted to have people know what a lot of money I would get for dowry. Then my father said in this case he wouldn't give the dowry. My mother insisted that he has to do it, because he gave her his word. So finally my husband said he doesn't want anything, and my father found that very advantageous; and they finally decided that the dowry is mine, but my father is manager of it. I couldn't take anything out of it except, I think, some of the dividends, the interest. And that was the end of it. And then my husband asked his parents if they could lend him something, to marry. They said, no, they wouldn't give any money, but they would give a silverspiel. That is a big box in leather, very big, with everything what you need in a household in silver, all the cutleries, but always for twenty-four people. Every kind, a big thing--it was worth 10,000 marks, which would now be \$10,000. That's what they give us, and we couldn't do anything with it. But we sold it afterwards.

WESCHLER: How soon afterwards did you sell it?

FEUCHTWANGER: When we needed money, we sold it. Then my father-in-law said to my husband, "You cannot marry in this suit you have on. It's too threadbare. You have to have a new suit. Go to my tailor and have him make you a suit." My husband, of course, was very glad and did it. I have to tell you this: much later, after two





years, when we had to come back for the war and my husband had to go to the army, the tailor sent my husband the bill. My father-in-law never paid for the suit. That was the first welcome we had when we came back to Munich. Then came another letter, a very insulting letter, from the brother of my father-in-law, who was also his partner in the business. My husband had before [borrowed] some money from him. I didn't even know about it. My husband forgot, probably. And he said, in a very menacing way, "If you don't pay immediately, I'll sue you." That was the other blessing. This was his real uncle. Well, my husband was very proud, and he immediately took what we had together, everything together, and paid it back. And he said, "And I pay also the interest of it." [laughter] Too proud--nobody had asked for it.

WESCHLER: Well, we now have you engaged. Were there any receptions or anything before the marriage?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, we had a big reception. Everybody came, all the friends, and all my courtiers brought flowers and books. Although it was rather obvious already, my...

WESCHLER: Your condition.

FEUCHTWANGER: ...my condition, nevertheless, they found it all very exciting and courageous. Also my husband said that even his brothers and sisters admired me very much. I thought they would be very shocked, but they were not.



WESCHLER: Do you think that you would have gotten married soon, anyway?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, I didn't want to marry, except when I find somebody--of course, many, many times I could have married very rich men and also good-looking men. But I didn't like them--they were not of my taste--and so I refused to marry them. I had also one man who considered himself already my fiancé, but I always said, "But how do you consider yourself my fiancé? I don't want to marry you." "I will go to your father and tell him," he always said.

WESCHLER: But do you think that you and Lion would have gotten married if your "condition" hadn't...?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, we didn't want to marry yet. We were kind of gypsies in those days, and we said marriage is just a bourgeois custom. We wanted to live how we lived until now. I was very amazed that my husband immediately said, "We have to marry." I didn't even think to ask for it.

WESCHLER: But you didn't mind.

FEUCHTWANGER: I didn't mind, no. [laughter] I was rather glad, I must say, but I would never have asked for it, never even have shown that I wanted to be married.

WESCHLER: Now, up to that point though, you had not been living together? You had just been seeing each other in



secret.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja.

WESCHLER: Maybe you can talk a little bit about the wedding itself, what that was like.

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, the wedding was on the Bodensee, that is, the Lake of Constance, the biggest lake of Germany. It's on the border of Switzerland, Austria, and Germany, those three countries together. It was in a very old castle where a medieval city council was, and the mayor. I was again very elegant, but in black. All in black.

WESCHLER: At your wedding?

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja. I did always the contrary--and also I was not in a condition to be in white. [laughter]

WESCHLER: I see.

FEUCHTWANGER: So it was very elegant, with a long train, and in black. It did me good service later on; I had an elegant evening dress.

WESCHLER: Was everyone there, both sets of parents?

FEUCHTWANGER: There were only my parents and my husband's parents, and one friend [Monheimer]. We needed somebody to witness, and he came, and he was very misgiving about the whole thing. He was a friend of my husband. He didn't like the whole thing. He thought it's not dignified. Later on, when we had no money at all, after we lost everything in Monte Carlo, my husband wrote him to try to



get something. I had some money coming, later on, in two years or so. He asked him to go to a usurer and tell him that I have proof, that I have to get some money, and [to ask whether] he would advance the money--which he did, but he kept half of it for himself. And then the friend of my husband kept another half of it, so very little came to us.

WESCHLER: Well, shall we send you on your honeymoon, now?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes. We immediately went from there to-- there was an island in the middle of Lake Constance with the "Insel Hotel"--the "island hotel." It was a very old hotel--it was once a monastery with enormous rooms. Not every room had a bathroom, but there was one bathroom which was like a hall, you know, so big because it was an old monastery. The emperor used to live there always when he was in Bavaria. We were there for a short time, and then we left, went to Switzerland and made mountain climbing and all kinds of things like that. I had almost a too early birth on the top of a mountain.

Then we went to Lausanne. I went to a hospital, and I got the puerperal fever.

WESCHLER: How soon after you were married was this?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, half a year, or not even so much. When it was time to get the child. I was very sick and near





death, because I had the puerperal fever, and the child died also.

WESCHLER: What are the symptoms of that fever?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, a high fever. It never went down.

It was an infection which I got from the hospital probably, from the nurse. In those days, it was always deadly, this fever.

WESCHLER: You had not had that before the child was delivered?

FEUCHTWANGER: No. You get it only after birth. Puerperal fever, it's called. This hospital was only for women, and the doctor said probably the nurse brought it from one patient to the other.

WESCHLER: The child died afterwards, or was it born dead?

FEUCHTWANGER: I was unconscious, then, for a long time. And the child died.

WESCHLER: But it was not born dead; it died afterwards?

FEUCHTWANGER: It died afterwards, yes. I wanted to nurse it, and probably that wasn't good for the child. I didn't know that I was so sick. It came out later, after several days. I was always in fantasies and fever. I only heard at night once the two nurses say.... The doctor I had, he had to go to the militia. You know, in Switzerland they have to make military service every year. And he was there. Then an older doctor came in his place.



When he saw the terrible fever I had--I couldn't move; I couldn't move my head anymore--he said I had to take very cold baths (it was in the winter, in November, in Switzerland) to get the fever down. Of course, the only thing what I got was rheumatism, which was even worse. Anyway, I heard the two nurses say, when they made me ready for the bath again, "Oh, this night will be the last night we will be here." I heard that, but I couldn't speak anymore; I only heard that they said that. But in my mind I said, "I don't think I will do that." [laughter]

Anyway, at night I woke up, and I saw the young doctor, the young doctor whom I had before, sitting on my bed. At first I thought, "It's a hallucination." But he was really there. He was so worried about me that he asked for permission to go to see his patient. He had heard of a new medicine, or a new treatment against high fever, which was an injection of silver--silver lotion or something. Half a pint of silver lotion in the side--it was terrible, and very expensive. He had to ask my husband if he allowed to do that. My husband said, "Of course. Everything what is necessary." And he gave me those injections. It helped. They were shots, you know, in the side. And it helped. Maybe it would have been by itself, but anyway, from this day on, the fever went down.

WESCHLER: How long had it lasted?



FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, several weeks. I don't remember. Then my parents came for my funeral. [laughter] When I could eat something, I asked for a good soup. I got always a soup from a restaurant, because it was very bad in the hospital. But also the soup from the restaurant was just water, so I asked my mother if she couldn't make soup like she did always when somebody was sick. That was the only thing I wanted.

WESCHLER: The child had been a girl-child?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, it was a girl.

WESCHLER: Had she lived long enough to be named?

FEUCHTWANGER: I don't remember. [She had been named Marianna.]

WESCHLER: One of the commentaries I was reading mentioned that later on, this showed up in your husband's fiction, in terms of his interests in father and daughter relationships.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes. That's true, ja, ja. I think so.

WESCHLER: Well, I suppose we should just go on from there. What happened afterwards?

FEUCHTWANGER: Then when I was better, we had to leave for the Riviera because the doctor said I had to go where it's warmer and not to stay in Switzerland.

WESCHLER: Had you originally planned to have such a long honeymoon?



FEUCHTWANGER: We had no plans.

WESCHLER: I wanted to ask one question before that.

About your attitude about having the child: had you been worried about how you were going to raise the child, in your relative poverty?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, we were not worried. We never were worried. But I had always a feeling I would die when I gave birth--long before. In those days it was not so rare, you know. There were no antibiotics or penicillin or anything like that.

WESCHLER: And you were fairly small.

FEUCHTWANGER: No, I was not.

WESCHLER: Okay, so now we have you on the Riviera. What was that like?

FEUCHTWANGER: On the Riviera we had again some money. My husband sold his dissertation to be a professor, the habilitation work, to the newspaper, to the Frankfurter Zeitung, and got a lot of money. It was in installments. Then we went to Monte Carlo. First we were in a little place, just to recover; we had a little house there, and it was very beautiful. Also it was rather cold on the Riviera. And I saw for the first time the ocean, the Mediterranean. It was a great....

WESCHLER: You had never seen the ocean before?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, never before. In Germany, there's





only the North Sea, the Baltic Sea, and we never were there, in the north. I was never in Berlin either. The first time I saw the ocean was the Mediterranean. We went sometimes at night there, with big waves and thunder during a storm. So we liked it very much. The little house had no real heating, only a fireplace. But it was a little eerie, because the wood was down in the basement; it was so dark. And the water was outside in the garden, with a pump. But it was very poetical and very picturesque.

WESCHLER: In which part of the Riviera was this?

FEUCHTWANGER: I think it's the French Riviera--no, the Italian Riviera. Pietra Ligure, it was called.

WESCHLER: And then you went to Monte Carlo, and you blew it.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, that's true. Ja, ja. But first we had a lot of fun there. We also went to the opera in Monte Carlo. There was a famous opera there. When I was once interviewed by Mr. [Albert] Goldberg here, the critic, he knew of the man who was the conductor of the opera. He was a famous man, Ginsbourg [?]. He was very famous. I saw Rigoletto there. And I saw the famous [Feodor] Chaliapin there, the Russian singer. Then he had a very adventurous program. He wanted to play Parsifal, Wagner's Parsifal, which was not allowed. It wasn't free to be



played anywhere but in Bayreuth. It was in the will of Wagner.

WESCHLER: Really?

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja. In the will of Wagner it was that this holy play, you know, which he considered very holy, could only be played in his own theater in Bayreuth, and Cosima Wagner, his wife, should supervise it also. But Ginsbourg wanted to play it in the Casino. Imagine, the Casino, where they are gambling! How he did it, how he dared it, I don't know. He just--he thought nobody would know, or whatever. Anyway, my husband wrote all the reviews about the theatre, so Ginsbourg invited us for the first performance of the Parsifal. Lion wrote in the Schaubühne about it. It was just awful, the performance. It was ridiculous, you know. There came the Gralsritter, the knights of the Holy Grail, and they all had mustaches with very upward, you know, like the kaiser, you remember--the picture of the kaiser, with this mustache. They had black mustaches like that, and when they came from both sides toward each others when they kissed each other as the knights of the Holy Grail, with those two mustaches together, it was just--we couldn't--we almost couldn't stay seated, it was so funny. And then there was Kundry. She was the great vamp, you know, who wanted to seduce Parsifal, the holy man. She was lying on a big bed on



the ground, a big bolster. And she was so fat you cannot imagine. I always said, "I think there are specks of fat underneath her, I am sure." She was sweating. She was a famous singer [Felia Litvinne]. And everything was so comical. But the singer himself was very good, also a Russian singer, I think. A very good singer. And my husband wrote just about the performance, you know, as it was. And there were no free tickets [offered us] anymore afterwards. [laughter]

WESCHLER: That was one of your last big swings before you lost all your money.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja, it was.

WESCHLER: How did that happen?

FEUCHTWANGER: Well, we never played together. My husband played on one table and I on another table, and I usually won, because I didn't dare much. I was looking a long time until I set money. It was all in gold, in those days. I was more interested in the other players. There were lots of Spaniards, and also the great duchesses and dukes from Russia, who had lots of money. The duchesses were always in fantastic dresses with diamonds; it was very interesting to see them, how excited they were. My husband always wanted to win, and when you want to win, then you lose. Sometimes he won a big sum; but he wanted it bigger, so he lost again. I always had won



just enough--and it wasn't much--so that we could go back to our hotel; we lived in Menton [and returned] by train. That was the only money--that we could still pay the hotel. That was all that was always left, and in the end that was all that was left.

WESCHLER: You had modest expectations.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja. I was not interested in playing. And also not in money. My husband always thought that this is a way to get money.

WESCHLER: Was this true all through his life, or did he get over it?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, he got over it. Ja, ja. Later on, he didn't play anymore. Oh, yes, he played once in Cannes again, I think. But it was not like that anymore. He didn't take so much money with him.

WESCHLER: Well, he learned his lesson because in Monte Carlo he lost everything.

FEUCHTWANGER: Everything. Except what was left, what I had to pay in my pocket.

WESCHLER: So what did you do?

FEUCHTWANGER: We paid the hotel, and then we took our backpack and left for the mountains.\*

WESCHLER: What season was this?

FEUCHTWANGER: It was spring. Ja, ja. But I remember--  
because we were in Nice also, and it was snowing there,

\* For additional details about this stay in the south of France, see Tape XXVII, Side Two.





which was very rare--it was a very cold winter. But now it was the beginning of spring. And we went over the mountains to Italy.

WESCHLER: Well, we have you now without any money, taking your walk into Italy. Let's turn over the tape.



TAPE NUMBER: IV, SIDE ONE

JUNE 24, 1975 and JUNE 27, 1975

WESCHLER: We're continuing with the bankrupt Feuchtwangers walking across the Italian Alps. What happened then?

FEUCHTWANGER: Then we went again to this little village of Pietra Ligure, where we were before, because we knew nobody would ask us to pay. We couldn't pay them-- we had no money for paying, for eating or living--until we got this money from the usurer which we had ordered. It wasn't very much, but still it was more than nothing. And as soon as we got this money, we took into our backpacks again and went on to our wandering into Italy.

WESCHLER: Either this was an awful lot of fun, or it was terribly desperate.

FEUCHTWANGER: No, it was only fun. It was not desperate, not a moment.

WESCHLER: Well, these are really the green days, I guess, the salad days.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja. We hocked everything what we had. We pawned everything: my husband's watch, which he had got again--a golden watch, after the one which he lost before--and my watch, and our wedding rings, and a diamond ring. Everything, we hocked. [laughter]

WESCHLER: You don't have your wedding ring now?



FEUCHTWANGER: No, we never had it back.

WESCHLER: What a life! Was he writing all this time, still, or not as much?

FEUCHTWANGER: Not very much, because we were usually on our way somewhere, walking, hiking up the mountains or in other villages. Then we went hunting with the son of the proprietor of the little house we lived in. It was very beautiful. He didn't shoot; we just went hunting. It was the first time I did something like that--

eating the berries of the mountains, and the picnics there. It was very steep and tiring, but it was life.

WESCHLER: What did your parents think of this?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, they didn't think of it. They didn't even know where we were. We didn't even tell them. Only on Christmas I sent them some hazelnuts. That was all. They have very big hazelnuts there. They didn't cost anything because we picked them ourselves.

Then we waited for the money; and when we got it, I made myself a very vampy dress, which was very clinching and not at all the fashion of the time. But I always wanted to do something other than other people. Then we went on; from Pietra on we took the train, because then we got this money from the usurer. We went to Florence. But part of it we always walked also. We sent our baggage ahead, and we went out of the train when we thought it was



nice and walked. Then we took the train again, and we were in Florence. We saw everything what was in Florence. We lived in an old castle there; this was an English pension, a boarding house in the old castle--very interesting, very beautiful. And when we had enough of Florence, we went on to the other small cities.

WESCHLER: Were there any things in particular that impressed you about Florence?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, yes, the David of Michelangelo, of course, and all the other.... We liked the Schiavoni [Slaves] of Michelangelo best. And the old bridge, the ancient bridge. And all those buildings there. And the Uffizi, where the paintings are. And one room where--the rotunda, it's called--where the most famous pictures are, like the Mona Lisa.

Then we went on to all those little places, usually walking or hiking. Pisa, Perugia, Siena, and all those old, old churches and cathedrals and castles--from one to the other, you know. Every one is a jewel by itself. And then we went to Rome.

WESCHLER: Now this was summer, spring and summer.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, spring, ja, ja. In Rome we lived in a very cheap quarter. But we were never at home, of course; it was just to sleep there. We were always on our way to see things. My husband always kidded me--even





long afterwards--when we came out from the station, the first thing I said was, "Oh, look, there is already something ancient!" And he found this so amusing. But I was so excited to arrive. And it was ancient; it was an old fortress, but that I said, "Schau, da is schon was Altes!" You know, it was in my Bavarian accent: "There is already something old." I didn't say "ancient." And he always kidded me, long afterwards.

WESCHLER: What were the kinds of things that Lion most prized seeing in these towns? Did he enjoy art galleries?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, always. We saw all the art galleries, and all the monuments, and also the old palazzi. There is also this old fountain there where they toss coins-- the Trevi Fountain.

But there was something else. When we came to Rome, we heard that the pope [Pius X] was very sick and they expected him to die. We came to the Vatican, to this enormous piazza in front of St. Peter's, with those galleries, those columns from [Giovanni] Bernini on both sides. In the middle is an obelisk. Then on the other end is the cathedral of St. Peter, and on the right side is the Vatican. It goes back to the Vatican gardens. And there-- almost the whole population was on the big piazza, to pray for the pope, for his health. They were all crying, because they said, "He's near death." And all of a sudden,



on the right side, high up (because there already begins a hill) was the room of the pope. And the window opened, and he was at the window in his white robe. And he blessed the people. It was already at night; it had become night, and everything was only lighted by candles. The whole arch--between the columns there was always a kind of luster with candles. At the rear was the St. Peter, and only the front was lighted, where also these columns were. But not the cupola, the big cupola, which had been made by Michelangelo. And on top of the cupola there was a cross, and then this was lighted. So the people fell all on their knees and cried, "Miracolo!" because they thought that this cross was in the sky. They didn't see the cupola, which was dark--they were blinded by the candles below--and they thought that the cross was in the sky because the pope felt better. It was a fantastic situation. And very unexpected, because nobody thought that he would be better.

WESCHLER: It was during this stay in Rome also that your husband first saw the arch of Titus?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes. It was in the Forum. That is a city by itself, the whole Roman ruins and all that. And he told me about Titus. We went through it also, and we saw the relief of the procession of triumph. They carried [the spoils] of the temple--the jewels and the candelabra



of the temple. That was all on this relief. Then Lion told me the story of Josephus. I didn't know about it. I think that was the time when he decided to write the novel about Josephus. But it took a long time until he really did it, because this was about 1913 and he began his Josephus novel in '28.

WESCHLER: In general, in these explorations, would you say that your husband's interests were more aesthetic or historical, or does that distinction make any sense?

FEUCHTWANGER: Both. I think both of them.

WESCHLER: In light of the fact that he becomes a historical novelist....

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja. But he was not interested in politics, but in individuals. He was interested in the being--in the human beings, in the personalities--and also in the relations to other people, in human relations in history. But not in politics, not at all.

WESCHLER: Did he enjoy--was he a great storyteller in talking, speaking?

FEUCHTWANGER: Usually he was not, but when we were together, when we were all by ourselves and didn't know anybody else, when we were wandering, he always told me about the history of the country where we were, and of the cities. I even learned a little Latin and Greek in this way, from the inscriptions. He translated the inscriptions



for me, and I learned. He quoted about the old plays of Aeschylus or Sophocles or Euripides, and I learned. And also what the senators in Rome said in their battles. And Julius Caesar and all that. All that, I learned just by seeing it. It was the best teaching.

WESCHLER: Well, we've covered an awful lot of ground today. Maybe we'll stop with you in Rome and we'll continue from Rome at the next session.

JUNE 27, 1975

WESCHLER: Before we get to Naples, which is what we'd agreed to start on today, we have a couple of flashbacks, and then we're also going to tell some stories of your childhood when we are talking about Naples. To begin with, you were just now telling me a story of a servants' ball in Munich at the time before you and Lion were married.

FEUCHTWANGER: This was an occasion when the famous actors and opera singers of the Royal Theatre and Opera made a ball for charity; and everybody, for fun, had to come as a cook, or a chambermaid, or an upstairs maid, with little lace bonnets on the girls' heads, and dusters, and always with high hats on the men as cooks. But I had another idea. I thought that everybody comes like that, and I would like to come as another servant. So I





came as an Egyptian slave, with a costume--very clinching, in green and violet colors--and with a golden hairband, and without stockings, and in sandals, which was already shocking in those days. And I made a big sensation, but they had to let me in because I was a slave and thus a servant at the same time. And my husband brought me to....

WESCHLER: He wasn't your husband yet at this time, though.

FEUCHTWANGER: No. Lion brought me to a friend of his, who was a famous writer and also publisher, a very elegant man, pale and demonic-looking. The girls were mad about him, and he had always the *jeunesse dorée*, the young, rich people, around him. He was sitting in a box....

WESCHLER: What was his name?

FEUCHTWANGER: Waldemar Bonsels. He had just published a book which was a great success. At the same time, an actress waved at Lion. She wanted to introduce him to her fiancé, who was later a very famous actor, Alexander Moissi. He played with Reinhardt. So my husband left me for a moment, and I was sitting with Bonsels and his *jeunesse dorée*. After a while--my husband didn't come back right away--Mr. Bonsels asked if I would come with him to eat a bite in the restaurant, which was on the side of the big ball hall. So there we were--there were little booths--



we were sitting there, and he had caviar and champagne, all the elegant things. (I never ate that before.) He bought all the flowers he could get, and he made advances, of course. I didn't believe he would do that, as a friend of my companion, which Lion was. I was very reticent, and cool, and reserved. He finally got tired of that, and he said, "Let's go back to the ball." But he didn't bring me right away back, rather through side doors and staircases, where the pairs were lying and petting and kissing; he thought that there should be a lesson for me, that this is the way to do on this occasion. But it didn't help. So when we came back I asked if Lion was there, and they said, yes, he had been there, but he had left again. Lion didn't come back, and I was looking for him. I didn't want to sit with those people so long. I was looking for my parents, and my parents were tired and wanted to go home. Finally we saw Lion when he just stepped out. Since he had invited us, he also accompanied us back to our house, but he didn't speak a word with me. He behaved very strange, and I couldn't find out why. The next day, I went to him and asked him what was his behavior, and then he told me that when he asked for me, the friends of Bonsels said to him they didn't know where I was, although I told them that I would wait for him in this restaurant. They didn't tell him that; they only told him they didn't know where I



was--and with a grin, so he would understand what would have happened. Also, what he told me much later, Waldemar Bonsels showed everybody who wanted to see it, or not wanted to see it, my shirt, which was a black lace shirt--which I never possessed, but he said that it was my shirt. He used to have always the shirt of the girl with whom he was sleeping. And that also came to my husband's knowledge. But he never told me about that. When I told him that there was nothing to it, that I was waiting at the restaurant as I had told his friends so that he would follow us, he didn't believe me, of course; but he pardoned me, in a way. Later on, of course, when we knew each other better, he believed that it wasn't true; and from then on, there was never any doubt, because what we did, whatever we did, there was always complete frankness. We never lied to each other.

WESCHLER: Off tape, you said that even though you didn't follow, necessarily, the bourgeois....

FEUCHTWANGER: No, it was not always the right thing what we did, both of us. [laughter]

WESCHLER: But at least you were completely frank with each other.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes. Ja, ja.

WESCHLER: Another story I wanted to pick up concerned the reaction of your gymnastics teacher when it was announced



that you and Lion were going to get married.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes. Then I went to the club and told them that I couldn't come back anymore because I'm marrying and going abroad. The president of the club, who was my teacher--I was his favorite student--was also the teacher of my husband in the gymnasium. The only thing he said--his reaction to the announcement of Lion's marrying me--was "I never would have believed it of you, Fräulein Marta, that you would marry such a bad gymnast." [laughter]

WESCHLER: But you did. And gradually, now, we've covered a good deal of the months after your honeymoon. There's one other story you just told me, before we turned on the tape, about the incident at the power line. You might tell that, too.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes. We made once an excursion on a smaller mountain, and on top of this mountain was a big electric high-power mast. There was a sign: "Danger. Don't Touch. Danger." And my husband didn't see that. I was afraid he would touch it, so I yanked him away and showed him this sign. Then he said, "What would you have done if I had touched the mast and fallen down dead?" I said, "I would have touched the mast, too." And this was in a way like an oath for both of us. He often reminded me of that later.

WESCHLER: Okay. I think that brings us up to Naples, which is where we were last time. You might talk a little





bit about what you did in Naples, where you lived, some of the places you went in Naples.

FEUCHTWANGER: We lived in the slums because we didn't have much money. But still there came some money, from some articles my husband wrote. So we could at least stay in a small boarding house. Although it was in the slums--it was absolutely only one block away from the port of Naples--there were those little restaurants where we got excellent little dishes for almost nothing to pay. And we ate some vongole--they are little shellfish. We heard that you never should eat the shellfish at all--for instance, oysters also. But those were cooked as a soup. So we ate it, and my husband ate more than I did. We became both very sick, but probably he became more sick than I. The lady of the boarding house had the doctor coming for us. He was a Swiss doctor. He said that there is no doubt that we both have typhoid fever. It was the law that nobody could stay in a house, in a private house, that everybody who had this fever had to go into the hospital. But he said that not many people came out alive of this hospital. It was very dirty in those days, and people were not well taken care of. He took it on his own that we stay at this boarding house; but we shouldn't leave the room, and only--I had to take care of my husband, because I was less ill as he was. He had a very high fever



and was rather endangered. It's very painful. We had always cramps, stomach cramps, and we couldn't sleep. So at night we told each other stories of our childhood, just to pass the time.

WESCHLER: In a way, this is the first time you heard a great many of the stories you've told us about his childhood.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes. Ja, ja.

WESCHLER: We were talking, before we turned on the tape, about some of the kinds of stories that you told each other, and we might just turn to some of those. Many of them had to do with your relationship to Judaism. These are other stories besides the ones that we've already talked about. You might start out telling, for instance, the story about your mother and her teacher.

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, yes. My mother lived in the same house as her teacher because they liked each other so much. So they took the apartment besides her teacher's apartment. She always cooked Jewish dishes, which this teacher never had tasted before, and she was always very much keen about eating those things. Once, on Passover, my mother made some matzo balls and brought it to her, and she found it delicious. After she had eaten it, she asked, in a very hushed voice--and it was obviously in bad conscience--if it is true that on Passover, the Jews always killed a Gentile boy. My mother was terribly upset, and she almost



couldn't speak. Then she observed that she--the teacher--smoothed it over and said, "Of course, I never believed it." So my mother forgot it absolutely, but I never forgot this incident. I was with her, and I just couldn't believe that something could happen. So I remember it so well, until to this day.

WESCHLER: You were also talking before about some of your cousins, the two Siegfrieds.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja. One of my mother's cousins was a doctor, and a very gifted young man. He went to Switzerland, and there he found many new treatments (of sicknesses) which were not known in Germany, and he brought all those new inventions back. I was very sick, and nobody could find out what it was. It was an infection. I was near death. And he had brought a medicine with him from Switzerland which made the turn of this sickness, it seemed. We had a doctor who was only for children, and he said this young man is a genius. Later on, this young man became also....

WESCHLER: What was his name?

FEUCHTWANGER: Siegfried Oberndorffer. And later on, he was assistant of the greatest anatomy teacher in Bavaria. He himself then was his successor at anatomy, got to teach, and all the students had to hear his lectures.

WESCHLER: Was that unusual for that period?



FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, that was unusual. He was the first Jewish professor of medicine in Bavaria. There was a gossip that he converted to Catholicism because otherwise he never would have become this position. Also he was director of the greatest hospital in Munich, the State Hospital. But he never converted; it wasn't true. Only people couldn't understand that he got this position without being converted.

WESCHLER: What about the other cousin?

FEUCHTWANGER: The other cousin of my mother was in the finance department of the government.

WESCHLER: What was his name?

FEUCHTWANGER: Siegfried--also Siegfried--Lichtenstätter. The name Siegfried was very popular because in those days the opera of Wagner has been played for the first time. He was a high official in the finance department and was asked by the royal court if he would convert; then they, or the Prinzregent, would make him minister of finances. But he didn't want that. Although he would have liked to be minister of finance, he wouldn't convert himself.

Both of them were not religious persons, but they wouldn't do that. It was not the point of view of religion, it was the point of view of belonging.

WESCHLER: In these conversations that you were having with your husband on the typhoid bed, you yourself were





talking about your temptations to conversion as a young girl.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes. At the school where I was, the teacher of the Catholic religion was a young priest, very good looking, and all the other students had a crush on him. I couldn't follow his lectures, his lessons, so I was in the corridor, and he saw me there. He asked me to come and take part in his lessons. But I had the feeling that this was not right, although I liked very much to hear about Christ, and mostly about the child Christ. I had no brothers and sisters, and this was very tempting for me. But I had the feeling it wasn't right, and I didn't come back anymore. I went to another class, where there was mathematics, and that was the reason why I had later such good grades, because it was a higher class. I was never very good in mathematics, but since I heard all those lessons which are repeated endlessly until everybody understood them, so finally I was one of the best in mathematics without even knowing it.

WESCHLER: As a Jewish girl in Munich, did you go to the cathedrals very often?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes. The niece of this teacher, my mother's teacher, she was a kind of maid there, and she used to go with me on long walks, and also to a place which was an imitation of Florence (the Hall of Lancius, it was



called there) the Hall of the Field Marshal [Feldherrnhalle]. There were lots of pigeons, like in Venice, and we fed the pigeons. And they were sitting on my shoulders, feeding out of my hand, and it was a great sensation. Then we went from one church to the other, mostly at the time which is from the Day of the Magi until Easter. And we saw the "cribs" they were called. These were [replicas] of the manger, in those niches in the churches; it was rather dark, only with candlelight. And this was very beautifully done. Everything in Munich was very artistic--even the people were. It has something to do with the neighborliness of Italy, because there are many Italian workmen there; also many of the churches were built by Italians. I think these very colorful things, like those cribs and those mangers, were influenced by the taste of the Italians. They were all hand-sculptured little figurines, with the ride of Maria on a donkey with Joseph, and the manger itself, and the Magi. All that was beautifully done: little trees, and little animals, little sheeps. It was just fantastic, and I never had enough, could never have seen enough of that. It was almost like a theater for me.

WESCHLER: Did you feel guilty about liking it so much?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, about that I didn't feel guilty. No. It was too colorful, and for me it had nothing to do with



religion, because it was very strange. It was more like going to the theater or hearing those fairy stories.

WESCHLER: You had also talked about going to the cathedral for consolation?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, that was when I was older. We lived near the big cathedral of Munich, the Frauenkirche, the Church of Our Lady. This was a very high and tall and Gothic building inside. It was very dark, with only some candles. Sometimes you could hear a choir of children singing. When I was unhappy I always went there and found relaxation and consolation.

WESCHLER: Again, these are all things that you were talking about with Lion.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja. And also the difference between the very severe religious service of the Jews--where the rabbi made all this very long and loud, was preaching longly and loudly, and it had nothing of peace in it--and this kind of religious service.

WESCHLER: The difference of that and the Christian, you mean.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja.

WESCHLER: How did Lion react to that?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, he could understand that very well. But the funny thing was that later on, when the teacher died, my parents changed their apartment, and we lived in



better quarters near the Isar--that is the river which went through Munich. This was a very good part of Munich, because my father was rather wealthy then. And there my mother went always to the old temple of the Orthodox, because it was too far to go to the synagogue in the neighborhood where we were first. We went on Saturday to the old temple, which was a very small building, also dark like the churches of the Catholics, and very simple. The rabbi spoke with a hushed voice and didn't preach loudly. There was only a choir, but no organ; the organ was so loud, always, in the synagogue, and filled the house with drumming on our ears. [But in the temple] it was much more like the Catholic service, ja, ja.

WESCHLER: The Orthodox service.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja. And it was not the service, but the atmosphere. It was dark and simple and small: that was, of course, not like in the Catholic churches. But mostly the darkness impressed me, and all those many candles. Also that there was not so much--the ladies in the other, the Reformed synagogue, were very elegant on Saturday, and sometimes they made gossip instead of praying. All that upset me, even if I wasn't--in those days I still was religious, I think. It upset me; they spoke about their dresses and things like that instead of





hearing the priest. But then in this little synagogue there were not many people there, because the Orthodox were not numerous. And this temple was supported by the family Feuchtwanger, and the relative family Fraenkel. The whole thing was very small and was much more apt to awaken religious feelings. Also I discovered something which was very important for me. In the pew, there was a real Bible. I had learned only some excerpts of the Bible. But this was a real Bible, unabridged. Ja, ja. For me, it was absolutely sensational what I read there. It was very interesting, and it made me much more interested in the Jewish religion. Until now I didn't know very much, except that I knew that you had to fast on one day, and on another had to eat a lot of good things. And this was--I knew something about the history of the Jews then.

WESCHLER: What were some of the stories that Lion told you that night?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, he spoke about his childhood at home. He said it was--for instance, since his parents were very Orthodox, there was always a young student there who was poor. Every day he was there for the meal. And for Lion it was always so disturbing that their quarrels were always fought out during the meals. Even he was ashamed before this stranger. Everybody in the family finally



had ulcers because they always were quarreling during the meal, with each other and with the parents.

WESCHLER: This was the time when he also told you the story about the swamp.

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, yes, that was all there, ja.

WESCHLER: Do you remember any of the other stories he told you on that night?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, he only told me that he couldn't stand it anymore, to sit always on this table. And that's why he also had, until his death, always trouble with his stomach, something. His sister also once had--one of the sisters, Henny, who's still living in Israel--bleeding ulcers. It was terrible; she fell over. It was on a Sunday, and he was alone at home with her. The others were all on an excursion. She fell over and had terrible bleeding, vomiting blood. He was all alone with her and didn't know what to do. The only thing was that he had heard once that some ice is good. So he went to the pharmacy to get some ice, because there were no iceboxes in those days. He went to the pharmacist [and got] ice, and there he was the whole day. No doctor was at home. He was sitting with her. He was afraid she could die, but she still lives. She is one of the two who are still alive. There are only two sisters, and she is one of them.

WESCHLER: You had also wanted to mention a couple of the



other stories that you told him--in particular about your father being accused of perjury.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja. My father had to sue one of his customers because he didn't pay for the merchandise. My father was a wholesale dealer then and made more money. But he sold him a lot of merchandise, and the man didn't pay anymore. The man then made bankruptcy, but in a fraudulent way. And to cover that, he accused my father of perjury. My father wanted money from him, but he said that he paid money for merchandise my father never delivered. So my father was accused of perjury. I remember--I was about five years old--that the whole night nobody slept, and it was like a nightmare. The next day my father had to go to court. He had no lawyers. He only asked some people who would know about law or something. He defended himself. He was not a very literary man; he was a genius in mathematics, but he was very illiterate in other things. But he defended himself so acutely that the judge complimented him on his logic and also acquitted him. And I found, when my father came home, that his hair turned white in this one night.

WESCHLER: And another family story which we called the Lolita story....

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes. A cousin of my father [Abraham Landauer], who was also related with my mother--he wanted



to marry my mother, and she rejected him--it seemed to me that his love for her attracted him to me. He came always on Sundays with his equipage, his carriage, with a coachman and a coach and beautiful horses. And we went into the countryside. He was sitting in the rear with me, and my parents were in the front, and he always kept my hand in his hand, and it was a strange relationship. I wasn't conscious of it but I had the feeling it was not right, what we did.

WESCHLER: How old were you at this point?

FEUCHTWANGER: About five years old. No--I was a little older: I was about ten years old, I think. I felt it wasn't right, but I wasn't sure about it. It was in the subconsciousness. This man--I called him Uncle--was very astute and also very rich. He advised my father always in his affairs. He also gave him good advice for this trial when he was accused of perjury.\*

Later on, his wife, who also liked me, had a literary circle in her winter garden, where there was a basin, a little pool, with fishes and a fountain, and beautiful dishes were served, and fruit. And everybody had to speak French. There was a professor of literature who was guiding the whole thing; we had to speak French, and it was something absolutely new and also unknown in Munich. I

\* Mrs. Feuchtwanger's notes detail that Abraham Landauer was the model, at least as far as physical appearance, for the character Isaac Landauer in Jud Süß.





don't know how I came to this, because all the others were older than I was and more [worldwise]; I felt rather like from the provinces. But they liked me and I profited a lot from that, and also I enjoyed it very much. [pause in tape]

WESCHLER: Well, I think we've now covered a lot of the stories you talked about that night. But we still have you very sick. Now you have to tell us how you recovered.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja. When we felt better, the doctor told us to go to the island of Ischia.

WESCHLER: How long were you sick?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, about two weeks at least. We were still very weak, but we had no fever anymore. So he told us to go to Ischia, which is an island bigger than Capri but was not very well known then. It was a real paradise. When you came there with the ship, there is the old fortress. Very beautiful. I think it plays a role also in the life of Michelangelo. It's called Colonna--he was a friend of the Princess [Vittoria] Colonna. We had also the address of a kind of peasant who had a little inn, a little house, in the vineyards--very little house, only one room always. We were in the middle of the vineyard, where the vine was hanging--not on wooden poles, but from one tree to the other; they were hanging down, the grapes, and the trees were peach trees. So we had everything what we wanted in this garden where our little house was, which was very



primitive. But the food of this peasant was excellent. He fished it himself. There were fishes, and lobsters, and everything. The funny thing was that other people were there who were very high society. For instance, there was a German consul general there who knew all about this paradise. This island had also something special. It had hot sources, a kind of earth source. It was called fango.

WESCHLER: Springs?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, it was not springs, it was thick like earth.

WESCHLER: Mud baths?

FEUCHTWANGER: Mud baths, yes. It was called fango. And there people came who had rheumatism or sciatica. The funny thing is that the word Ischia is the same as sciatica, but it didn't mean sickness; rather the shape of the island was like a lying goat. And this man, this consul, was a very interesting man, very cultured. He knew my husband; he read his critics in the Schaubühne or so. At the same time, I found out that he was also homosexual. That was the first time I saw a homosexual. There were very interesting people coming always to see him, mostly of the Italian aristocracy. So in this little peasant inn, there was the most funny company you could find anywhere. And it was very interesting, and we heard



a lot about the social life of Italy.

There was also a most funny thing: one Italian count could speak in gestures, like a mime. That was the Italian way to speak. He could tell or show with his hands what means beautiful, or if something was not true--all that he could explain with this Italian, this Neapolitan way of speaking. Before they spoke, already with their gestures, they could explain everything. It was very amusing.

It was the first time we had a real warm ocean; we were already bathing in the north of Italy, but there it was very cold. Here the water was warm. We were lying in the sun, and my husband got such a terrible sunburn that the whole skin of his back came off. It was like a big blister, and then the whole of it came off. I dried it, and I always had it with me--until Hitler came; then we lost it. I had it in an envelope on which was written, "Skin of Lion." [laughter]

WESCHLER: God. The things you left behind!



TAPE NUMBER: IV, SIDE TWO

JUNE 27, 1975

WESCHLER: We're talking about the island of Ischia.

FEUCHTWANGER: On Ischia, there were no cars, for instance.

WESCHLER: You can tell us other stories about the island.

FEUCHTWANGER: There was also a young Dutchman at the inn. We were complaining about the fleas. That was the only black thing in our whole life there. They came only at night. And he said, "There is a very simple thing. Each one of you takes a basin of water, and then you wait. Then the fleas come from everywhere in the room, from the floor and from the bed, and want to jump on you; but instead they jump in the water." And so every night we were free then of the fleas. It was a very good recipe.

WESCHLER: During this period, you had more money.

FEUCHTWANGER: "More money" is too much. But we had some money.

WESCHLER: Where did that come from?

FEUCHTWANGER: That came from articles my husband wrote for newspapers, and also for the Schaubühne. Then again came some money. I think I got also some money from-- I had something left from my grandmother, and some interest came. So we went to Capri also, which was more elegant and more known than Ischia. For instance, Goethe was there





and wrote about the Blue Grotto of Capri, and how dangerous it was. It was really a funny thing: this grotto was on the outside of the water, of the island, but there was no way to go there except with a boat. It was very steep. This Blue Grotto was very famous for its blueness: the blue light was like electric light, but it was the blueness of the grotto itself, of the water. And you had to wait with the boat until there was a wave which retired.

WESCHLER: The tide went down.

FEUCHTWANGER: So, in the morning, when the tide was out, you could slip into the grotto, because the entrance was below the water. Inside, it was very quiet. It was a rather big grotto. Everything was blue, and in the Baedeker there was another funny thing. It said that little boys offer to dive into the water, and their body looks silver, absolute silver, in this blue water. But this is expensive--it costs one lire--so you should rather put your hand in the water, that's the same effect.

[laughter] And we swam ourselves. Our guide allowed us to swim in it. But usually it's not allowed.

WESCHLER: Were you just there by yourself or with a group?

FEUCHTWANGER: I don't remember. I think there were other people also, but very few.

WESCHLER: Were there many people on the island of Capri at that time?



FEUCHTWANGER: Later on. When we came, it was not the season yet, but then came the bathing season. The Italians always said you have to have fifteen baths in the ocean [each day]. This was a standing question, "Have you already had your fifteen baths in the ocean?" This was during the time of the vacation. There was a fashion: the aristocracy of Rome went every year to another spa or resort. Sometimes they went to the north, to Viareggio, which was very elegant and international. And this time they came to Capri, which was much more simple, and less known, and also not so elegant. They came and were bathing there, too, taking their fifteen baths and swims on the small marina (not the big marina, which was on the port, but the very small bay). We lived above this small bay in a house which was absolutely like glued against the rock. You wouldn't even know how it was hanging there. Only by very steep little steps, very high up, could you come into the house, and it was all very little rooms. But you were never in your room except for sleeping. We were always wandering around, climbing on the mountains there. Sometimes we went at night on the mountain to see the sunrise, and also the whole day we were on the beach, which was just below our house. There was a balcony--more a terrace, with columns. It was all like the old villas of the Romans. But it was not to imitate them; it was



the style of this country.

When we were swimming down there, there was always-- the cousin of the owner was a priest, a Kanonikus, a kind of higher priest. When we were swimming--there were no little huts where you could change. We had it very easy because we could change in our room and go down in our bathing suits. But the aristocracy who were there came by boat usually from the Grand Hotel on the other side. The other side was not so good to swim. There was not so much sun. So they came around the island, in boats which looked like the gondolas of Venice. So there were lying beautiful ladies with umbrellas, lace umbrellas, and with pants, lying there, very voluptuous. The men were usually with the girls--I was one of them--flirting with the girls. The ladies were outside and looking, very sophisticated, at what their men are doing there. It was very funny. One was very much in love with me. I always said to him, "What do you want from me?" You have this beautiful lady out in your boat. What do you want from me? She is so much more beautiful than I am." She was a princess. But he said, "Oh, I know her such a long time." Finally, when it was very warm, the ladies also wanted to take their fifteen baths, and they came on the shore. There was nowhere to change, so their maids came with them. They had big sheets, and they held the sheets, and the ladies changed



there. And they had always a corset on, even when they were swimming. They were beautiful, very voluptuous looking ladies, and the corsets later on were hanging to dry on a strip. Of course, nobody could see them when they changed, because the maids held the sheets, but the Kanonikus on top, at the terrace, he was looking with binoculars. And when we came up, and he saw us coming, he was not ashamed. He said, "Oh, what a voluptuous air it is today." He was a real Italian. [pause in tape]

The old industrialist, Krupp, had had a villa there. It was called the Villa Krupp, and a little path went there between those rocks. There was no way to really make a street there with all those rocks, so this path went to the Villa Krupp. It was said that he had come here because he was homosexual and he liked the Italian children, boys, very much. The boys were still all clad and dressed in very showy [clothes] because they made a lot of money with that. The parents had allowed that, that the boys came to Mr. Krupp. They had red silken shirts and looked beautiful, of course, those Italian boys. And the old man loved those boys.

WESCHLER: Which Krupp was this?

FEUCHTWANGER: It was the Krupp, you know, the real-- the founder of the family fortune, and also of the heavy industry [Friedrich Alfred Krupp]. [Actually, Friedrich





Krupp died in 1902; his successor, Gustave, would have been forty-two in 1912.] He was not young anymore then. But everybody knew about it. And there was also this story--I think I told you--about Gorky.

WESCHLER: No.

FEUCHTWANGER: When we climbed around this Villa Krupp, not far away, it was very beautiful there, this view. You could see to Ischia. So we climbed around, and then we heard somebody writing on a typewriter. We asked some people who was writing. That was very unusual that somebody was--first of all, that somebody was working at all on the island of Capri, because it was like from Greek mythology: only gods lived there. So we heard this man, and somebody told us that this was Gorky, Maxim Gorky, the Russian writer. My husband had read all his books, and also knew his plays. He even wrote about him already. But Lion was too shy--Gorky was so famous, more famous out of Russia than in Russia itself.

WESCHLER: Was he an exile at the time?

FEUCHTWANGER: It was a kind of--yes, it was a voluntary exile, because it was during the Czarist regime. For a while he was banned to Siberia, and when he was free then he went out of it. Also he had acquired tuberculosis, so he had to stay in a southern climate. My husband was too shy to visit him, so we were sitting underneath this little



house, just listening to the typewriter, and this was for us the greatest event we could imagine.

WESCHLER: And you never did go to see him?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, he never did go to see him. Then when Lion was in Russia--Gorky had died shortly before he was there--Lion met his wife. And his wife told Lion a very interesting story. Gorky had read my husband's book Success--it is about the beginnings of the Hitler time, the first Hitler Putsch--and she said her husband, Gorky, was so impressed by this book that he said to her, "Now I can die in peace, because I know that I have a successor." That's what he said she said to my husband. That was the best he ever received.

WESCHLER: Well, are we done with Capri? Should we go on from Capri now?

FEUCHTWANGER: I think that's all. Ja.

WESCHLER: So what happened then?

FEUCHTWANGER: Then when we had our strength back, our money was always less and less, so we went again back to the continent and began to walk again, to hike again.

WESCHLER: Now, did you go to Vesuvius or to Pompeii or any of the places around there?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, we were in Pompeii, of course, and that was a fantastic experience. There is also a villa which was very well conserved, but people were not allowed to go



except when they had the permission. This was where the very pornographic paintings were. They were murals, more or less, ja, ja. My husband went in, but I didn't dare to go in. All the other ladies went in, but I didn't want to go. [laughter]

WESCHLER: What did he think of it?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, he knew about those things, of course. He had studied all that before. He was not very surprised about it, but it was interesting to see it. And also those murals are of high artistic value. [pause in tape] Perhaps if I could have gone with my husband alone, but there was a guide, and I didn't want to be in the presence of a foreign, strange person.

So we began hiking again. Later on, it was the rainy time, even. But at first it was very beautiful, and sometimes very hot, so hot that the air was like flimmering on the beach. It was the movement of the heat. But it was all very beautiful and untouched. There were no roads and no cars.

WESCHLER: Where was this general area?

FEUCHTWANGER: That was from the south of Naples, it began.

WESCHLER: Now, you'd run out of money by this time.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes. We ran out of money. We had just as much so we could sometimes eat. I remember that we came first--there was lots of rain, already, fall rain. But



we didn't mind; we sang in the rain and came absolutely wet sometimes to a little inn, or a house, where they took us in and we dried our things, you know, one after the other. Then the next day we went on again. Sometimes there was not much to eat, but sometimes we got eggs or tomatoes, or eggs with tomatoes. It was very adventurous. Later on, we wanted to go also to the mountains, from one side of the Italian boot to the other. So finally we came to a mountain group which was called the Sila. There are two; there are the Abruzzi, which are higher mountains, with the Aspromonte--that's the highest mountain of Italy--and the Sila, which are more wild and unknown, absolutely unknown. So we wanted to see the unknown. We went up to the mountains. We didn't know much about the distances, how long we would have to walk to go to the other side. When we came up, we found out that it was forty-eight hours we had to walk. We found that out because when we thought we were on the top of the Sila, there was on the other side a valley and another top. We saw up and down the tops and never saw the other side of the Mediterranean. It was already cold; there was snow lying. We heard the wolves howling, and there was nowhere to go overnight. There was no house--nothing. Finally my husband saw--we saw a shepherd with his flock. That was all what was alive there, except the howling of





the wolves. And my husband said maybe he could tell us where to go, what to do. "But I don't know if he will understand us." Because we learned the Florentine Italian, which is the best Italian; and in those parts they spoke a dialect. When we spoke with our German accents, our Italian, they thought we are the real Italians, but they are. [laughter] Anyway my husband said, "Oh, I don't know how I should explain it that we have lost our way and don't know where to go." But then he remembered from Dante, from La Divina Commedia, where it is all symbolic, that he says,

Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita  
mi ritrovai per una selva oscura  
che la diritta via era smarrita.

That means, "In the middle of my life"--but it's all symbolic--"I was in a wild forest, and I had lost the right way." That means in the soul; but the word "smarrita" was the word for "I lost my way." So my husband said, "Oh, I know how to ask him; I just say 'smarrita.'" And that was the right word, and he understood it. He said, which we understood half-and-half, that it is forty-eight hours to go to the other side, but we could stay with him in his little lean-to. It was a little hut. There we could stay for the night, not to be eaten by the wolves. Then we had nothing to eat. He had nothing to eat, but we had some sardines in our backpack, and he had some nuts



in his hut. So we exchanged our delicatessen, and it was very nice. Then we went on the next day; we were fortified. And could at least sleep. Then we came to the other side, which was also rather unknown by foreigners. But it was very funny that it helps when you know literature. You have to know La Divina Commedia. [laughter]

Then on the other side, it was a long time until we found something to eat, a village or so, but there was a funny thing: when you saw a shepherd with black porks, very little porks, in big masses--it was just full of those little black porks--then you knew that you would find some chestnuts, because the only food for those little porks were chestnuts. So we followed the flock of the little porks and we found some chestnuts, which we ate, and then we found some berries, and it was all very nourishing. [laughter]

Then finally we came to a village. It was a very simple inn, and we were glad to wash ourselves and sleep in a bed again. Then the waiter came and said, "There is a man outside who wants to speak with you." My husband thought he wants to sell us some souvenirs or something. He said, "We don't buy souvenirs." But he said, "Oh, no, he's a riccone"--that means a very rich man. So my husband let him in. He came with handfuls of gold, threw them over the table, and said, "I want to buy your wife."



So we were horrified, because we thought if we were near the coins then he could say, accuse us, that we took something. He threw it in every corner! My husband said, "I'm sorry, she is not for sale." [laughter] Then he went away, very angry.

Outside were a lot of people standing--there was a little balcony, like a Spanish balcony--and shouting that they wanted to see us. We didn't know why, and then this waiter, who was also the maid and everything, he said, "You know, they think you are circus people, and they ask, 'When do you make the play? When do you show us the circus?'" So you have to go out to this balcony and show yourself." So we went out and the people went away, thinking that the next day we would make our presentation, but we were already away the next day.

Then at the next village where we were, we couldn't find anything to sleep, so somebody, a young man, came and said, "You can sleep in my house." It was a little hut also. I said, "Are you married?" He said, "Yes, but I sent my wife away to her sister's, and you can sleep with me." Then I said, "We cannot sleep with you. My religion does not allow it." So he said, "Oh, we will see." We went into his house, and then he really didn't go away; so we had to go away because he just wanted to stay there. Then he began to shout with us; he must have drunk a little bit. Anyway, he looked



dangerous to us; they had always knives on them. So we began to run. We took our backpacks and began to run down the hill and up the next hill, and then we were in another village and he didn't follow us anymore. Since he was drunk, he couldn't run so good. [laughter].

But this man who wanted to buy me, he followed us with his car--he had a car and a chauffeur--everywhere. How he found us I don't know, because in those parts there were no streets or roads. But he found us when we were on the other side, and he followed us everywhere we were. When we went in a restaurant to eat, there was this man at the other table, always sitting and looking at me. My husband reminded me of a story which he knew from Hermann Bahr, an Austrian writer. He told of a wife who was always so sorry that she had no more courtiers since she was married, so her husband paid a beadle, a church servant, to sit always at the next table and look at her, and she was happy. Now my husband said, "There, that's your beadle again!" [laughter]

Then we came to Catania, but not the big Catania. There's a big Catania on Sicilia, but this was a smaller village of the same name. We went to the post office, because we thought there would be some money again. But we had great difficulties because we had German passports and they couldn't read German, of course. They didn't want





to pay us out. There was a gentleman, an older gentleman, with a younger gentleman. He saw the whole story and saw how we tried to persuade them that we are we. So he said, "You know, you have to have an identification card, but you have to have two witnesses to get that. I and my nephew here will be your witnesses." We never had seen this man before. "We will be your witnesses; we will testify that you are what you say on your passport, and then it's easy to get your money." So we went to the mairie [the town hall], and he and his nephew testified that we are Feuchtwangers. Everything was all right from then on. But then, of course, we couldn't right away go away, and he wanted to invite us for dinner to a restaurant. I was with him, and my husband went with his nephew. And then he said, "Why don't you come with me? I have a villa in the suburbs, outside of the village. What does this young man, your husband, do for you? I am rich and you can stay with me." So everywhere we came they wanted to marry me. [laughter] It was so difficult because we always owed something to the people because they did something for us.

WESCHLER: But you didn't owe them that.

FEUCHTWANGER: No, that was too much.

WESCHLER: A general question, just about walking around: I don't want to show all of our cards yet, but this, after



all, was a year away from World War I, a war in which Italy is going to be fighting Germany.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, but not right in the beginning.

WESCHLER: I was going to ask: was there any tension at all from being German in Italy?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, not at all. The Italians were very much in awe of Germany, because sometimes they saw their battleships coming. I remember that once, in the beginning, when we were still on the Riviera, there was a schoolteacher who came up and said, "That's the German navy." You know, to tell us. Full of awe. Italy was a rather poor and small country, and they were honored to be the allies of Germany. There were three allies: Germany, Austria, and Italy. But then when the war began, they knew that it is not possible to win the war, even with Germany, so they went to the Allies.

WESCHLER: Would you say there was tension for French or English people in Italy?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, that was later. That was in Tunisia. There they were against the French and for the Germans also. Also, Krupp, for instance, couldn't have stood there except that Germany was the big brother of Italy.

WESCHLER: In general, in 1913, were there any indications that international relations were getting tense?

FEUCHTWANGER: No. In Italy they were not so much interested,



maybe. But before, when we left the French Riviera, I tried to change something at the bank. I had some kind of German bonds, from my grandmother, some hundred dollars or so, and I went to a bank in Nice to ask if I can change it into francs. But they said they cannot do that because it has no value in France. Then this director said, "I want to speak with you as a German." He asked me into his private room, and he told me, "You know, we are very much afraid of Germany. You have there a man, your emperor, who just has to push a button and there is a war." Because the emperor always made those speeches about the jump to Agadir. He spoke out, always menacing against the French. That was in Morocco. He spoke about the jump to Agadir, the tiger jump to Agadir, or something like that, because in Morocco was the Mannesmanngesellschaft, a big factory for arms and heavy industry. Mannesmann had a big interest there, and the emperor was always menacing to do that and that if the French didn't do that and that. I don't remember the occasions, but I only remember these kind of speeches he made.

WESCHLER: Well, you really seemed to be living a very Bohemian and luscious life. Could you conceive, in 1913, with the life you were leading that the world was on the edge of war?

FEUCHTWANGER: Not at all, no. We thought he just was



speaking, you know. We laughed about the emperor. There was a wordplay which is difficult, maybe, to translate: the old first emperor, Wilhelm I, he was called the Greise Kaiser; that means the "Old Man Kaiser." His son, who was Friedrich [III] and was only emperor for ninety days because he died of cancer, he was called the Weise Kaiser; he was a wise and very mild and peaceful man. And Emperor Wilhelm II was called the Reise Kaiser. That means he was always on a trip, to get allies or so.

WESCHLER: Reise means traveling.

FEUCHTWANGER: Traveling. Ja, ja. The Greise Kaiser, the Weise Kaiser, and the Reise Kaiser. So in Bavaria we always laughed at him. Also, there was a dish in Bavaria, which is made out of eggs and flour, a kind of omelette. And that was called the Kaiserschmarren. In the dialect, Schmarren means "stupid speeches" or something like that. The speeches were called Schmarren, but you could also say to somebody, "Oh, don't speak this Schmarren." This nonsense. So when the kaiser was making his speeches, they always called it the Kaiserschmarren.

WESCHLER: So your emperor's speeches were scrambled eggs.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, scrambled eggs. Ja, ja, you could say that. [laughter]

WESCHLER: Well, let's get back to you in Italy, and the end of your trip.





FEUCHTWANGER: Yes. Then we were there in this little town, Catania. Of course, everywhere we went to eat, the other people, who were pharmacists or doctors, all those nobile, the noble people of the little village, they were at the other table. When they heard there's something like that, like we were there, some foreigners, then they came to look at the foreigners. It was the only thing which happened in years. They spoke with us; then they spoke about literature. When they found out that my husband was a critic and a doctor also, they spoke about [Gabriel] D'Annunzio. D'Annunzio was the greatest poet in those days in Italy. Someone spoke about a certain plant which plays a role in one of D'Annunzio's works-- a [honeysuckle] plant in the garden. My husband said, "I never saw this plant. What is it? How is it looking?" And then a man got up--it was in the middle of the night so he took his flashlight--and he looked for this plant and brought one so we would see what this plant is.

WESCHLER: D'Annunzio was very much appreciated at that time in Italy.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, but he was also somewhat ridiculed a little bit. His ways as a playboy and all that, and with this famous actress Eleonora Duse--he didn't treat her very well sometimes. So he was not very popular. He was admired but not popular.



WESCHLER: What did your husband think of him?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, he thought him an interesting poet but also too refined. He didn't say that, that there's anything to say. But it was already the time when my husband began to doubt about l'art pour l'art.

WESCHLER: Art for art's sake.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja.

WESCHLER: Okay, well, let's continue with you. I would think at this point you're getting near Christmas in Italy.

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, yes. Then we went around the southernmost part of Europe. That is on the sole of the boot of Italy.

It was already beginning to get cold, and finally we arrived at Scylla and Charybdis--that is from the Odyssey,

you know. Ja, ja. We arrived at Scylla, and this was

Christmas. Our money was always less and less, so we

had to take what we found. It was in a little inn;

below was the inn itself where people were sitting and

drinking wine. We had the upper story where our room was,

but this room had a big crack in the middle, and we could

see down to the people who were sitting there and drinking

wine, and hear what they spoke about us. It was a terrible

night; it was a tempest. This little inn was on a rock,

and the sea was attacking the rock, you could say, and

the sprays came through the windows inside. It was howling,

and there was no light except candles. And below in this



room they had only candles, and it was very eerie. That was our Christmas.

WESCHLER: It was a Christmas worthy of the epic location. Well, you're about to go between the Scylla and the Charybdis of 1913 and 1914.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, and from then on we went to Sicily. Sicily is known as the warmest part of Europe, so we wanted to go to Sicily during the winter. We went first to Messina; that is the port. When we came by ship, there were beautiful Renaissance palazzi or baroque palaces, and it was very imposing. Then we arrived and wanted to look at those palaces. But there were only the fronts; in the rear, it was all ruins from the earthquake which was several years before. But it had never again been built up; they had no money. Nevertheless, the whole front on the side of the ocean was intact.

WESCHLER: Was it because it had not been taken down by the earthquake or because they had built up just the front?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, they didn't build it up; it was just standing. It must be that the front was more solid than the rear. And everything was down. We had to go a long time through the ruins until we came to an inn, where we then lived. We came to a church, where a goat was grazing the grass which came out between this rubble. And a priest was kneeling before something which before was



probably an altar. It was all so very exciting--and, at the same time, depressing. But the blue sky was above, and the ruins were very white; it was beautiful and depressing at the same time.

WESCHLER: That site is an eerie site to have in 1914; it's almost like a symbol of the coming year.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja. But this earthquake, I think, was in 1906. And nothing had been built up. It was a very poor country. Mostly Sicily was poor. In Capri we met also a count who had a big estate in Sicily. He said, "Nobody can go to Sicily, of the rich people, on account of the Mafia." It was absolutely--as if--it was almost official that the Mafia was governing Sicily. But he said he could go because every year he paid a very large sum to the Mafia so he would be protected, he and his children. He had to buy his protection there. He could go to his estate.

WESCHLER: What kind of contact did you have with the Mafia, if any?

FEUCHTWANGER: We had no direct contact with the Mafia, but we saw a lot of what they did. In those countries, there is still the old Greek custom that the foreigner is holy. The foreigner was not in danger. Sometimes when we walked and hiked, the people told us, "You can do that, but we couldn't do it." For instance, on one street, we





were on the wrong road. We went through, and there were workmen working on the roads. They were very sorry that I, as a woman, had to hike. And they said, "Can we buy some fazzoletti from you?"--that means handkerchiefs, to sell from our backpacks--"So you can buy your wife a donkey, that she shouldn't have to go always on foot." People were very humane there, but you never knew what they were also in the other way. People were very poor--also the Mafia was not rich there. They became only rich when they went to America to make some money. Sometimes they came back with their money. But there nobody could get rich. It was a very poor country, and also not very fertile. On one road we were, they told us that yesterday they killed a milkman there. But they found only a ten centesemi in his pocket. For everything, they killed. They were so poor.

And then, when we wandered in about the middle of Sicily we came to the town named Sperlinga. Lion always told me a story about this Sperlinga which he heard in his Latin class: "Quod Sicilia placavit, sola Sperlinga negavit." That means this little town, this very old town, from the ancient times, did always something else than the others: "What all Sicily liked to do, only Sperlinga didn't like to do." This little town or village was on the top of a hill, and the road went below. And there were



two carabinieri--that is, policemen--who had very beautiful uniforms with long feathers, very colorful, and those hats which look like Napoleon hats. They were waving to us and shouting nice words of welcome. We passed, and when we came to the next village, somebody said, "Did you hear about those two carabinieri?" We said, "Yes, we saw them." "Well, they are already dead; they killed them." Some of the Mafia had killed those two men.

WESCHLER: Do you have any idea why?

FEUCHTWANGER: No. There was always vendettas, they called it. Maybe some of the police killed one of the Mafia, so the Mafia killed them. The vendetta was the only thing which reigned there.

WESCHLER: Did you climb Mount Etna when you were there?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, we climbed Mount Etna, and that was also a very funny experience. It is a very high mountain. It's about 10,000 feet high, but that doesn't mean like in Yosemite or somewhere, because it began from the ocean. When you go to a mountain here, you are already about 1,000 feet high when you begin to climb. So it was a very long climb. We had to have a guide, because there are so many little mountains around and you never know which one really goes to the top. We had a guide, and the guide had a mule with him, but we had no mule. We went beside the guide. It was very tiring, because when you made one



step, you rolled two steps back because all is volcano;  
it is all...

WESCHLER: ...pumice.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja. Something like that. It was rolling back, and it was very tiring. There was an osservatòrio, almost on top, where you could stay overnight, to go to the top later, the next day, because it became always already dark, even if you began very early. And the osservatòrio-- it had no heat, and there was snow around it. There is always snow, eternal snow, around the top of the Etna. There was nothing: nothing to eat and nothing to heat, not even covers or something like that. We were very cold, and we tried to get up very early to the top; what [else] could you do when it's so cold?

Then, as soon as we were on the top, there was a terrible trembling. The whole mountain jumped up and down. We heard also rolling noises from inside of the crater. There came smoke out, and it smelled of sulfur, and there was a great earthquake. It seemed like the beginning of an eruption. So our guide, who was beside us, all of a sudden jumped on his mule, and away he went; we didn't even see him anymore. We were alone on this mountain. But we knew about where it goes down: it's easier to go down than to go up. Anyway, we found our way to a village, but not where we came from--another village. And when we went



to this village, it was all down. There was no house standing anymore. A big crack went through the cemetery, and the bones of the dead had jumped out.

WESCHLER: What do you mean? The bones actually...?

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja. The sarcophagi--everything had broken open.

WESCHLER: The coffins had broken open?

FEUCHTWANGER: The coffins had broken open, and the bones jumped out during the earthquake. We saw the bones lying there. All the women and children died in the houses. The men were out in the fields. They didn't die. Only the women and children.

WESCHLER: Then there was a great deal of mourning going on.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, of course, ja. We came then to the next, bigger village, and there the church had a big service for all those dead. Very beautiful are those villages. They are all built of the pumice stone, which is not porous, like you think, but black and white. And all that is like a checkerboard. The houses are built in black and white. Also the churches.

WESCHLER: Had there been an eruption at that time?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, it was not an eruption. It was only an earthquake. But it sounded, it felt like an eruption, because inside there was so much movement and the thick





clouds of smoke came out, and the sulfur.

WESCHLER: Do you have any idea how many people died during that time?

FEUCHTWANGER: It wasn't so many, you know. It was just in these little villages. The cities far away felt the earthquake, but nobody died there. But the people are used to that. Also they build their houses again on the same place where the earthquake was.



TAPE NUMBER: V, SIDE ONE

JUNE 30, 1975

WESCHLER: Today we're going to do a very brief backtracking, and then we're going to come to the Sicilian spring of 1914. But you might start with some stories about Melilli and tell us what that is.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes. We had again some money, which we had got at the post office with our new legitimization card, and we came through Melilli, which was an ancient town. There was a famous battle there during the Greek times. Greater Greece, it was called. Sicily was part of Greece.

WESCHLER: Magna Graecia.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja, that's true. We went to the cathedral because from far away you could see very high up this cathedral. There were an immense amount of steps going up to the cathedral. We saw women coming with vessels full of water, and on their knees they washed the whole steps and dried them with their long black hair. The next day, when there was a big celebration of this holiday, they brought out all the animals which they had into the cathedral--the dogs, the oxen, the donkeys, and the cocks--and all had to bend their heads down to the floor and get blessed by the priest.



WESCHLER: This was almost more heathen than Christian.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, I think so, too; it must be an old custom. Then later we came to a little village, and when we left the next day to go farther on our adventures, a man followed us and asked us if we would buy some old coins. My husband said, "We don't have the money for that." But he insisted and showed us one which was actually the medal of the cattle exhibition from the year before. That was all what he had. My husband didn't tell him that he knew that it was a fake; he only said, "I'm sorry, we don't buy any souvenirs because we don't have the money. That's why we're hiking." But the man muttered something like: "There are still knives in Sicily." So my husband said, "Yes, your knives; I have a gun in my pocket." And he patted his pocket where the Baedeker was. And the man disappeared.

Some days later, there was another adventure, which wasn't so good. When my husband left the inn, he overturned his ankle, but he managed to go to the next village, which, I remember, was called Vittoria. We said always he was victorious with his ankle. But the ankle began to swell terribly and was also very painful. So I went to the pharmacy to get some liquor alumin acetatis [Burow's solution]. It is a medicine to make compresses, for an astringent. In those days in Germany, everybody used that



for everything, whether it was a head cold or whatever. Anyway the pharmacist, who was usually the only literate man in those villages (except the doctor), he understood my Latin, and I got the right thing. But when I wanted to go back to the inn, there was a whole bunch of young people, young boys, who surrounded me and pressed me against the wall. I always boasted that I could defend myself, but those were a little too many. Anyway, I began to shout in German, mixed in with some Sicilian bad words, and they let go of me and ran away. I think it was not so much my German or the bad words, but they remembered probably the hospitality which was there still from the times of the Greeks.

WESCHLER: Before we turned on the machine, we were saying that it wasn't that you were courageous; it's just that you lacked the fantasy to see how dangerous a situation it was.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes. And also, I had to be courageous: There was no other way to be. There was no merit in it. [laughter]

WESCHLER: Okay. Well, we might proceed now to the story of Count Li Destri.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja. After we went to Sperlinga, where they killed those two policemen, we arrived at another village [Gangi], which was high up on a hill, and very steep. I





think we spoke about that. We went again to the post office, as usual, to see if there was some money. Before that we went to a vedova; that is a widow who usually had one bed for rent. So we asked for a vedova, and the kids brought us to a vedova. Then we went to the post office. A man came in to send a telegram, and he saw us standing there. The man absolutely didn't fit into the whole landscape. He had English plus-fours, riding pants, and a monocle, and a black-and-white sport coat. He was absolutely out of another world. He immediately saw that we are also not belonging there. He spoke with me, and the first thing what he said were angry words. He said, "A lady like you shouldn't be so tanned. Your face and your neck are tanned; you should take more care of your skin." Then he asked me what we are doing here, and we said we are just wandering around. Then he found that my husband spoke Italian and that he was a rather literate man, and he said, "Have you got a good stay for overnight?" So I said, "Yes, we have a room with a widow." We had our backpack with us still, because we didn't leave it: it was all we had in the backpacks. So then he motioned to a policeman, the only policeman of the little town, and told him to carry our backpacks. We went, and he said he is looking [to see] if it's well enough, this room. So when we came there, the landlady began to cry and said, "I knew immediately those were no good, and now comes the police. What



did they do? Are they criminals?" Then he said, "Shut up," to the woman, and said, "Those people are not staying with you. They are my guests in the castle." He paid her something. We didn't want him to pay, but he didn't accept it. He said we are his guests, and he paid. So we went to his castle, which was even higher up on a rock, an old Spanish castle, and very forbidding from outside. But inside it was rather comfortable, and the count went with us to our bedroom. He even looked under the bed [to see] if all the commodities were there. He ordered the policeman around, that he had to be our servant. Then we had a meal, and for this meal all the people from the little town brought to their master and governor--I think he was a kind of governor there also--all what he needed to eat. The peasants had blue long coats and looked very, very picturesque.

One brought a basket of artichokes; another brought some chickens--it was absolutely a procession--and [they brought] also vegetables, tomatoes, and everything, and put it down before his feet, just like in ancient times. Then the policeman was also the cook. He cooked a very good meal. He asked how long would we stay there. We said, "I think we go on tomorrow to Palermo." He said, "No, you have to stay a little bit longer here, because tomorrow there will be a big procession. We've had a long drought, and all the vineyards"--which belonged to him; he had a beautiful wine,



which he offered us--"and all those things are in danger. There is a procession to pray for rain." And we have to see that. So he ordered us to go higher up on the tower of the castle. There was a little balcony; a wrought-iron balcony. So there we stood. And below, on this very steep and also forbidding little street, the procession went through, with the priest, of course, before. Then came the maids, the girls, and then came the boys, who had no shirts on and were naked to the belt. They beat themselves with chains until blood came out from their back. Then came the count with the policeman, who held an umbrella above his head; so that was a kind of palanquin. So they went up and down those steep hills, and lo and behold, there came some drops of rain. Everybody said it's a miracle, and they said it is only the strangers brought this miracle. It wasn't much of a rain, you know, [laughter] but still a gesture.

WESCHLER: Was the count completely part of the ceremony, or did he feel it was strange?

FEUCHTWANGER: Absolutely, he had to be there.

WESCHLER: Did he feel it was strange?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, no, that was the tradition and all that. He didn't feel strange. Also the Italians are not inhibited; they are very outgoing, and they like the showing. This whole thing was so beautiful and colorful--all the costumes. So he was just proud to show it to us, you know.



Then we went on, and later we went to the Segesta, which is in the middle of Sicily, a beautiful ruin of a temple. You see it from higher up, and then there is a big valley around. In the middle of the valley there is again a hill, and there is Segesta. It looks a little bit too--what should I say?--ornamental, maybe. I have seen much more beautiful ruins which were much more impressive than this one, but still it was very beautiful to see.

Then we came to Palermo, and we forgot all about the count. My husband had the first pajama that existed in those days in Munich. But this pajama was too much in use, so it began to go apart. We lived at the house of a beadle, and his wife had a sewing machine. So I said I will try to make pajamas myself. There was nothing to buy like that in Italy. So I went into a store, where there are some materials to buy, and before I came to the store, I met the count on the street. Oh, he was so happy to see me, and he asked what I am doing, and I said, "I am just going to buy some material for pajamas." He said, "I accompany you so you would get the right thing, and also so that everything will be all right and helpful." We got some violet material [laughter] of which I made then a pajama, which even fitted. The count invited us into his city palace for dinner. There was a maid there, and it was very, very noble and quiet. It was quite something; absolutely different than this village.





Here he was really the count. After our dinner--it was the use in Germany to give always a tip to the cook--my husband went into the kitchen to give the tip. But the cook didn't understand that, and she gave my husband her hand; it was a handshake. He didn't dare to insist that she take the money because he was afraid that Sicilian hospitality would be wounded. [laughter]

WESCHLER: And there are lots of knives in Sicily.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja. But a kitchen knife was not so dangerous. [laughter]

WESCHLER: What was Count Li Destri the count of, all of Sicily or just that area?

FEUCHTWANGER: He was just a rich man. He was very rich. He owned all this land around, and most of all he had wine. The wine was called Monte Corvo. Really it was not just a noble wine, as the French or Rhine wines are, but it was a very, very pleasant wine, and rather strong, also. The funny thing was that forty years afterwards I found the same wine here in a wine shop. So it must have become rather famous, that it came even from Sicily to California.

WESCHLER: Well, any other stories of life in Palermo?

FEUCHTWANGER: Palermo was just--we went to.... [pause in tape] It has a very famous monastery and also church there, and this was very interesting. We went also up to the Mount Pellegrino, because it's a beautiful view there. This



town where we went was rather well known [Monreale]. There were even some strangers we met there, some English. It is all very influenced by Moorish, a Moorish-Gothic mixture. The roofs were all golden there. But it was a little too pleasant, you know? It was not what we have seen before of antique cathedrals or so. It was a little playful, I would say. Also it was imposing with this golden roof.

But then we went to the other side of Palermo, back to the east, and there is a town which is called Cefalù. This is also a very old town. There it was rather difficult also to get something to sleep, but we finally found a room. But there was a funny noise. When we came into the room, it was droning; and we looked on the ceiling, and there was about ten inches of flies around, which made this noise. Absolutely--they were sitting one on top of the other. It was absolutely covered with flies. We said we couldn't sleep there because they would be attracted when we sleep. I told them, "But we cannot sleep here; it is impossible." So they said, "You take the kerosene lamp out from this room and put it in the next room and leave only a little opening. The light will attract the flies." And really they came in thick bundles, the flies came out. It was such a noise, you know, this rrrr-zzzz. Finally there was not a single fly anymore in there, and we could sleep. People really know what to do even without poison and chemicals.



But why we came there was also the cathedral, and this was one of the greatest impressions I had, we both had. It was a Byzantine Christ, very big, only mostly the head, as usual in those Byz[antine works]--like the icons, but enormous: the whole wall of the church. It must be one of the most beautiful paintings, or murals, which exists, and it was still in very good shape. And just the right light, not too dark, so we could still see. It's a fantastic impression, this Christ. Cefalù, it's called: that means in Latin, I think, hat. There's a big rock there which looks like a hat, and it goes out to the Mediterranean. So this was a very funny combination of flies and the greatest, most beautiful Christ that we have seen.

WESCHLER: Did you go then on to Syracuse?

FEUCHTWANGER: Then we went just across Sicily to Girgenti. From there we saw Segesta, and we went also to Segesta to see it. From there we went to Girgenti, which is Agrigento in Latin, an old town, a Greek town also. The whole town is still in very good shape, also many, many houses and temples. There you could see again some Swedes and foreigners, not like the unknown Sicily. In the neighborhood of Girgenti is Selinunte. This also was the greatest one of--there are three things which impressed us most: one was Paestum, which is near Pompeii, this old Greek temple which is still standing there (there are two temples, but one is the



biggest one; they are in the Dorisch style, the oldest kind of Greek temples); secondly, this head of the Christ; and then Selinunte, because Selinunte was the biggest Greek temple which ever existed, but from an earthquake it had fallen down and all the columns were right in the shape of the temple. It came all down on one side and, when you went on a little hill, you could see the shape of the temple lying down. The columns were very big columns and crenels, and all was yellow, burned yellow from the sun. There was nothing but little palmettos, little wild vegetation, and the hot air, and this beautiful temple there.

WESCHLER: Would you say that Lion's sympathies were more Latin or Greek? Or does that question make any sense?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, I think Greek was--of course, it was of greater value, because the Romans imitated the Greek. But he was also a great admirer of Cicero and all the Roman writers--Ovid. The plays, the dramas, were the Greek dramas.

WESCHLER: Were his Greek interests primarily the playwrights?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, Socrates, for instance, Plato, all the philosophers, and Aristotle. He was at home with them. They were a kind of--as if he had studied with them. They were so natural, so near to him.

WESCHLER: And that just came up in common conversation?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, and in conversation I learned everything about that, even a little Greek, if it was necessary.





Even the Greek alphabet, and also how it is written.

It helped me when I was in Russia: I could read a little; I didn't understand what I read, of course, but at least I could then use the letters.

WESCHLER: Okay, well, let's continue on.

FEUCHTWANGER: Then when we came from there, then we wanted to go more to the west. There is a madeira, a very good wine for the pope, which is made there in a winery.

But then we saw many people coming toward us, mostly peasants on these donkeys, with silver bells and beautifully dressed, and also the donkeys were in colorful embroideries. We asked one where they are going and what this is all about. They said, "Oh, we are going to the fiesta of St. Aeschylus." He was a saint, Aeschylus. So we heard that there is a great festival that was [celebrating], I think, 2,000 years that the amphitheatre [at Syracuse] has been built. The first time, the Agamemnon played there. And for this occasion they played Agamemnon again. And this, of course, it was something what we had to see.

WESCHLER: Now, Aeschylus had become known as St. Aeschylus?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, the people didn't know: why should there be a fiesta or a feast or holiday, if it isn't for a saint? They didn't know anything about Greek or Latin. They only knew about saints. So that, of course, there just was the fiesta, the feast of St. Aeschylus.



On our way we heard about something else. We heard about the Cava d'Ispica. That is a cave more to the middle of Sicily, and it's very difficult to find. We had to have a guide, who had also his mule with him. We walked and we came to this cave. It was a valley. What I remember is something which has nothing to do with antiquity and all that, but he gathered some wild asparagus on our way. I said, "What are you doing?" He said, "You will see." Then we came to this valley which was very narrow. Both sides were very steep walls of the mountains, and in these walls were cut those caves. You had to go up on rope ladders. My husband was a very good rope climber, so he climbed up, and they were all lived in. There were people living there. It was from the antique times, and maybe it was even from the very early Christians who were there, hidden. Anyway, the people were so poor they were glad to live there. They had no houses. They lived there, and they had always a hole in the ceiling and could go from the upper story to the lower story with a rope. And the whole thing went to the sole of the valley with those ladders, those rope ladders.

WESCHLER: What was your response at that point to all that poverty? Did it make you angry?

FEUCHTWANGER: It's a funny thing that with people so poor as they were, they were all happy. They were singing, and



had something to eat, and they had not to--you know, the climate is very good. Of course, there are maybe two months where it is cold or rainy, but the whole year they didn't need heat, they didn't need much clothes. Things were growing. They had a lot of corn, or so. No wheat at all! Corn was the only thing, and some macaroni. But the macaroni was for the feast, for the holidays. But they had goats which they could eat, and then there were wild hares there. And mostly fruit was growing there because around the Etna it's very fertile, this lava. It's very fertile ground. So they were all happy, and they didn't know better. The children didn't have to go to school if they didn't want, and there were no teachers and no schools there. They were just happy. While we couldn't say that they were-- their clothes were whole: they were not torn--but, of course, all was simple. You never had the feeling that people were really poor in those days. Maybe they didn't know better: there was not television where they could see how the rich lived.

WESCHLER: For you, who did know, though, was seeing this poverty in any way a politicizing experience in terms of its making you angry?

FEUCHTWANGER: No. We envied them because they were so happy, and they didn't need anything. It was more like when you go to Indian philosophy: you don't need so much luxury.



Also in those days we were away from luxury. We had seen that in Monte Carlo and all that, and we liked much better the nature and those beautiful things from the antique times that we could see. We were just filled from that. Also the people were very glad to see us, and we were immediately welcomed.

Then we saw also why our guide had gathered this wild asparagus: he brought some raw eggs with him, and in the middle of the valley he made a little fire. He had also a pan, and so he made some omelettes with wild asparagus. That was the best thing I ever ate. I envied the people who had all those things growing around. They had nuts and all that. It was real--they were in those back-to-nature times. So we didn't think that they were poor, really.

WESCHLER: I'm just thinking of Jud Süß. There is this sense of the serenity of poverty that comes through there.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja. I think so, too. Also Rilke, in one of his poems, writes about that. There's a great shine of poverty, or something.

WESCHLER: So, although it is true that in the next several years Lion is going to become more and more political, it was not in response to this?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, it was just--you heard probably of the Sicilian spring, the spring of Sicily: it was so beautiful then in spring, all the almond trees were flowering, and it





was all pink--the whole landscape was pink. It was just beautiful. We forgot all about that Christmas when we were in this terrible weather, you know, where the crack was in the ceiling and all that; we forget about that immediately.

WESCHLER: Well, we're in the Sicilian spring, and by August of this year, World War I will begin. What happens in between?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, but then we went again across to the other side, to Trapani. From there, we took a boat. That is on the western side of the island, and from there--a little more to the south--you could see from far already the coast of Africa. On a clear day. So we went to Africa.

WESCHLER: Before you leave Italy--this is again a question leading to World War I--on the other side of the Adriatic were the Balkans, and it was in the Balkans that the war was going to begin. Was there any sense of that tension in Italy?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, not at all.

WESCHLER: It wasn't talked about at all?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, the Italians were not very political, and we were even less political. We just didn't like the emperor. He was always talking. But we were so far away. Prussia was so far away in the north somewhere, you know, and we always tended to the south, like Goethe, and all those people.



Oh, yes, I have to tell you something else: I had the intention to follow Goethe, who wrote The Italian Journey, I think it's called. I thought we should go there where he was and [note] what were his greatest impressions. He tells about a villa, which in those days was also a kind of castle, a country castle of the Prince [Ferdinando] of Pallagonia. He said this Prince of Pallagonia was a madman, absolutely mad. One of the funniest impressions was when Goethe went to his castle, because when you enter the courtyard, there were some columns around, arches. And on top of the columns, on the roofs, there were the most bizarre sculptures; they were almost frightening in their exertions and contortions. He speaks a long time about it, and I wanted to see that. So we went, and it was difficult to find anybody who knew about it. But finally we found this villa, and it was really impressing. Not too much frightening, but still I could see how it impressed Goethe. Then we went on, and all of a sudden we came to a rather--not a very elegant-looking house, made of wood. It was in the same neighborhood, inside the wall. The door was ajar, and we looked in, and we were really frightened. There was a monk standing inside, pale like death, not moving. We didn't know if we can go in or not, and he didn't say anything. So we opened the door more and went in, and then we found out he was of wax. It was so eerie: it was half-dark,



just so you could see his face. Then we went on. There was a very narrow corridor; on both sides were cells, and everywhere were monks. One was kneeling before an altar; one was sleeping; one was studying. And it was a whole monastery, but all of wax. And this also this Prince Pallagonia made.

WESCHLER: And that you didn't know about?

FEUCHTWANGER: We didn't know anything before, but it was really fantastic.

WESCHLER: Where was this, exactly?

FEUCHTWANGER: It was in the neighborhood of Palermo. So we found always things which were interesting, and nobody knew about it. If I hadn't said I wanted to see the castle of Pallagonia, we wouldn't have seen that. But Goethe doesn't speak about those monks; he only speaks about the contortions of those sculptures.

WESCHLER: When people read this interview, you may have started a rush of tourists to that haunted house. One other general question, before you go to Africa: you say that Lion was doing some writing of articles.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes. For instance, he wrote also an article for the Frankfurter Zeitung about an election in a little village. It was the most beautiful thing you could imagine. It was on the other side of Calabria, on the Ionisch coast, which goes to the Balkans--that side. This little village had a market place; it was absolutely steep. It was difficult



to go up and down on this place. It was this day of the election, the first election that they had there, and they had all kinds of things hanging out from their windows which were in all colors. Later I saw that in Spain during a bullfight. They themselves had beautiful costumes. The most beautiful costumes you imagine were in this part. Also, in this Albanian [section of Calabria], where we were, the people couldn't read or write; so they could not make elections with programs, only with the picture of the man who has to be elected. But there was no competition--it was only one man--so it was very easy.

WESCHLER: Vote for this picture.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja. For this picture. The whole thing--everything what they made in Italy and mostly in the south is a big fiesta, a big feast with dancing and singing and drinking. But they were never drunk. That was the funny thing. They all had wine, because they cultivated the wine themselves, but you never saw a drunken Italian there. Although they were not spoiled with eating, we found what they ate very good. Some things were even excellent. They had pigeons there which they had--maybe it was very inhuman, but we didn't know how it was: they held the pigeons in a dark room, so they wouldn't develop any feathers and became very fat--very big and very fat. Later, I saw the same thing at the big delicatessens in Germany, also, and in





France. They made barbecues with them. They turned them around, over wood mostly, wood which was very well scented, all that wood from old vineyards. So it was the greatest delicatessen you can imagine. They had that, and they didn't even know how good it was. But for instance, you could find one day those pigeons, but the next day they had some old lamb meat which you couldn't eat--it was like shoe soles. But they didn't care; they ate the one and the other.

WESCHLER: Getting back to this question about Lion....

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja. Then he wrote about these elections, and all the color, what a great fiesta that was, that they didn't care who was elected, they didn't even know what it was. It just was an occasion to be gay, to sing and to dance, and to have beautiful colors.

WESCHLER: I'm trying to imagine him writing. Did he have a typewriter with him?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, no, that was not invented yet. It was invented, but a very rare thing.

WESCHLER: So he would be writing these out. Would he write at desks, or was he outside? I'm just trying to get an image of him writing at that time.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, wherever he found a table he was sitting down writing. We had not always tables in the rooms where we lived. I told you once we were in a pigeon coop. So



he couldn't write there. Sometimes he wrote when we were on the beach. We ate our sardines when we didn't have anything else. There were very cheap sardines there, so we ate sardines, and he wrote then.

WESCHLER: About how much of each day did he write?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, he didn't write every day. Just when he had some mood or he thought, "Now I have to write because we need some money." [laughter]

WESCHLER: At that point, was he a laborious writer or did he write easily and quickly?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, he didn't write easily. He was very conscientious when he wrote. Of course, he wrote a long thing about the theatre in Syracuse, about Agamemnon.

We came there during the rehearsals; they let us into the rehearsals. Then there was a man who was sitting there.

We were like little insects in this big amphitheatre. The man who directed saw us and was asking us what we are doing there. My husband told him that he's a critic and he wants to write about it. So he told us more about his intentions and also that--they both were of the same opinion, that that doesn't need much scenery because there was the ocean in the back. That was intended, when it was built then--building the amphitheater--that the ocean was in the rear. There was already so much there from nature. So he had only two small buildings in the middle, where the choir came out, and things



like that. But the funny thing was--it was the most important rehearsal, and every actor who spoke you could hear twice. There was an echo. So the director didn't know really what to do. But my husband said, "I know that Reinhardt"--you know, the famous director--"he had the big cirque filled with soldiers once. Maybe you should try that." So he went to the Kaserne, the barracks, and asked there if they could have the soldiers. The soldiers came, they filled the [stage], and then it was the right acoustics.

WESCHLER: That was true at the performance as well?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, absolutely. And my husband wrote about it. When you know German, you can read the critic. Somebody found it in Germany in some library.

WESCHLER: Were the soldiers in their Italian uniforms?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, they were soldiers just sitting there enjoying themselves in the sun: they didn't have to go exercise.

WESCHLER: They could be echo shields.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja.

WESCHLER: Well, I suppose we should go across with you to Africa now. How did you do that?

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja. Oh, we took a ship--because my husband got some money--and went to Tunisia. It was very hot already--it was July--so hot that people didn't go out during the midday time! But we liked the heat. I remember I had shoes



with not-too-high heels, but still they were heels and they got stuck in the asphalt. It was so hot that the asphalt became soft. (Maybe it was not the right mixture in those days, also.) Anyway, we found those little restaurants, and it was just delicious, those French kitchens--very little portions, but a different kind, and very cheap.

WESCHLER: At that time, Tunisia was a French colony?

FEUCHTWANGER: It was a French colony. My husband went to the German consul because he wanted to know where we could go for bathing, where we could find a shore to swim. The consul said that it is not very easy to find there, because nobody bathes in the ocean, and mostly not women. There was no possibility.

WESCHLER: Because of the Moslem morality?

FEUCHTWANGER: It was just...yes, also maybe that, but it was more that nobody went. They had big baths in the palaces, and the others didn't wash themselves, only the Jews.

[Years later] in Catania, where we were, we always went for breakfast in little cafés. It was very hot, so the most beautiful thing we ate was caffè chiaggio, that is, ice with coffee--just crushed ice with coffee. It was wonderful. On the other tables were mostly officers, because there was a big barracks of a whole regiment there. Of course, when they saw me there, that was something unusual, so they came and asked us if we would try the





different dishes--they sent us different dishes. One of these officers came just from Tripoli. Mussolini had made war in Tripoli and conquered Tripoli. That is to the east of Tunisia. He said that they were quartered in private houses, and they all preferred to go to the Jewish quarters because they were more clean. It was cleaner from their religion, but still it was more formal. But the Jews were really more clean also in their apartments. So they always were glad when they had quarters with the Jews.

WESCHLER: Was there a large Jewish community in Tunisia?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, everywhere in North Africa, more even in Morocco than Algeria. Everywhere.

WESCHLER: Was that an Orthodox community?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, I think so. We didn't know them. But we saw them, because people told us that you can see the difference: the Jews were also in costumes, in Arab costumes, but the women had no veils. The only difference was that the Jewish women had no veils and the Arab women had veils.

WESCHLER: Did all Arab women at that time have veils?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, all the females. Also, there were whole streets which had Jewish shops in the bazaars. There is a bazaar which is covered, and this had little shops inside--dark, you know. People sitting on the ground. They were called bazaars or suqs. The Jews were mostly goldsmiths,



made beautiful things from gold--also gold wire, wire things. In the streets were always the same artisans, in different streets. So when you were in the goldsmiths' street, then you knew they were all Jews. That was the only thing, because we couldn't speak with them if they didn't speak French. We had not the language, didn't speak Arab.

WESCHLER: Did the Jews speak Hebrew?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, Arabic. Ja, ja. Probably they spoke also Hebrew, but more for a religious purpose. But the language was Arabic. And they went along very well with the Arabs; there were never any difficulties.

WESCHLER: Well, you're still looking for a place to bathe. What did the German Consulate tell you to do?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes. They told us that the only thing is to go to Hammamet--that is in the south of Tunisia, on the Gulf of Hammamet--and there maybe there was a possibility that we could find a place which is very deserted where we could do what we wanted. But there was no official place for bathing. And that's what we did, also.



TAPE NUMBER: V, SIDE TWO

JUNE 30, 1975

WESCHLER: As we turned over the tape, we were talking about not quite remembering whether things are true, or rather are things that are told so many times that we think they're true. And this brings up Goethe.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja. Because Goethe wrote one book about truth and fantasy, and another book, which I told you about, about his Italian journey. And in this book about his Italian journey, he writes about the Blue Grotto [in Capri].

WESCHLER: What is the name of the book? In German?

FEUCHTWANGER: The Italian Journey. [Die italienische Reise]

WESCHLER: And the book about truth and fantasy is...?

FEUCHTWANGER: That's another book, a more important book, Dichtung und Wahrheit. This is one of the most important books ever written. Anyway, he writes about the Blue Grotto, how terrible it was, because they had to go around the island with a barque, and it was a terrible storm. They couldn't find the entrance to the grotto because it was underneath the water. You can only go there at low tide, and just for a moment. Then you rush in with the high tide. You have to duck down so you wouldn't hit your head or lose your head. [laughter] So anyway, he writes about



this terrible storm, how dangerous it was, and how much he was afraid that they would drown. And then people in Italy, mostly scientific or literary people, made a study about it, because he was known so much in Europe, of course. Everybody knew about Goethe. So they looked at a geological yearbook and they found out that in this year there was no storm, and not at all in Capri. That's what I tell you [laughter] about truth and fantasy.

WESCHLER: Well, we'll hope as many of these stories as possible are true about Tunisia; and the ones that aren't true, we hope they are at least good stories.

FEUCHTWANGER: I try my best. I think also they couldn't be invented, because they are so near to our whole trip that it couldn't be very well invented. I could exaggerate, maybe, sometimes, but I didn't even do that.

WESCHLER: As long as it's a good story, we'll allow you to keep telling it.

FEUCHTWANGER: Before we went to Hamamet, we went to Carthage. There was great solitude there. There was nobody there. Maybe it was the heat. Sometimes in Tunisia, they came more or less during the winter, in those days, the French people. It was the heat, probably. We went there, and we found it beautiful, because this landscape looks better in great heat. It needs the atmosphere of heat. There are not many great ruins of Carthage, but the whole





atmosphere and the landscape are so beautiful. And we really found a place where we could bathe in the ocean, in the sea. When I came out, we saw--in the rear, there were hills, and just as the sun came down (the sky was red and the hills were black already)--there was a man with some camels. He was riding on a camel, and other camels followed him. It was like a silhouette: you didn't see more than the black silhouette. And slowly he went. Then the man began to sing. It was because he saw that there were people here bathing, and so as not to embarrass us, so we could quickly cover and dry ourselves, he began to sing, just out of discretion. But the thing was very beautiful.

Then the next day we went to Sidi-bou-Saïd. This is a little place, more to the west. It is also on a hill and very white, also bleached out from the sun. Everything is white, of course, and with flat roofs. This little place was so steep that there was only one street, and this street was only steps. We went from below high to the top of the village, only on steps. When you went up, there were women going up and down with their beautiful costumes and veils. On their heads they had vessels with water. They had to bring the water from below, down to up: only the women had to do that; the men never carried anything. But it was so beautiful, the whole costumes and also how they carried themselves, their movements. It's so old, you'd



think it was a Greek dance, almost, the way they move. And when you looked up, you saw the stairs, those steps, and the steps went right up to the blue sky. I was always saying it's like Jacob's ladder, because it went absolutely into the sky. You didn't see anything but sky, white steps and sky.

Now there is a German consul there, and we are very good friends. We have a correspondence. She's a lady, a doctor [Irene Weinrowsky], and she lives in Carthage-- against the will of the consul general in Tunis because they said it's not secure enough. But she likes that, and she's not afraid. She sends me always cards from there, because I told her how much I liked it there, and when she can, she finds postcards to remind me again what I have seen there. She said nothing has changed.

WESCHLER: What was Lion's familiarity with Islam?

FEUCHTWANGER: He liked the Arabs very much. He admired them also. They are an old culture, and they were good doctors and astronomers. They were the first to dig those artesian fountains deep into the [ground]. Lion admired them, and when you know his book, The Jewess of Toledo-- I think the Arabs who are in this book are most sympathetic of all of the characters.

WESCHLER: Was it already before he went to Tunisia that he had his interest in Islam?



FEUCHTWANGER: Always, ja, ja. He read very much. He also learned a little Arabic; he knew a little Arabic. Every time we went into another country, we tried to know a little--at least the numbers, so we wouldn't be cheated too much. [laughter] But he was very much interested in Arabs.

All those people we met there were wonderful people. Through the German consul, we made acquaintance with a man who worked for the German consulate, because the Germans were very much liked in Tunisia. The French were hated because they were for so long colonists. They considered the Germans, first of all, more powerful, with all those battleships, which were to be seen in the Mediterranean; and they also thought that Germans someday would free them, liberate them from the French. So we were very welcome. Very much welcome. This man whom he introduced, he was called a kawash; that was a kind of employee, a translator, also. The consul gave him free time so he could always come with us and show us everything. This kawash, which is not a very high position at the consulate, he was a German. He was married with a German, and he took the German citizenship because he worked with the consulate. Afterwards I found out that in the Arabic world, he was a high personality. He was there more or less to find out what happened (a kind of spy--not a dangerous spy) in



the German politics against the French. He invited us everywhere to the Arabs.

WESCHLER: What was his name? Do you remember?

FEUCHTWANGER: No. I think I will remember later. [Abdul El Kader]. First of all, he invited us to a wedding, an Arabic wedding. This is also something very remarkable. It was a rich family. The women are together and alone, in another house even, because they are not allowed to be without veils with other men. Also the bridegroom has never seen his bride before. The wedding is the first time he is seeing his bride. I knew I was invited to the women for tea, but my husband was invited by the men, and they said I shouldn't go there while my husband went there, so they allowed me as a sole woman to come to the men's marriage festivity. We were sitting there on cushions, and there were funny things to eat which I didn't like. Either they were too sweet or too spicy. Now wine, of course, because they were still Mohammedans. Then came a kind of theater. There came belly dancers. They were very tall, and rather--I wouldn't say fat, but they had good, well, good proportions.

WESCHLER: Voluptuous.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja. And they belly danced, and the men clapped with their hands, always faster and faster. There were musicians, and the musicians had to be blind, because





there were women and no other men should see women, except as his own wife. So they had only two blind musicians. Then they clapped always faster and faster, and finally it was almost like an orgy. It was a little wild, and my husband and I, we decided to go. So I don't know what happened afterwards. [laughter]

The women were also in those carriages which were all hanged with drapes so nobody could see them. But they shouted. Wild shouts came out of those carriages. They drummed with their hands against their lips, and the shouts were broken by this movement, very fast. It was very shrill. It was frightening. And so they went through the whole city. That was a kind of--probably also from ancient times.

WESCHLER: This was in anticipation of the marriage, not in grief.

FEUCHTWANGER: No, not in grief at all, no. It was just the way of fêting.

Then we were invited at the summer palace of the sheikh. The sheikh was the king of Tunisia. There was also a French consul there, because the sheikh had a kind of autonomy. There was a king there, and the French had their consul there as a politician, a diplomat. And we were invited. There is a museum outside of [the palace]. We saw the museum, which was interesting because most of it



was brought from the ocean, from way down in the ocean, from shipwrecked Greek ships. From those shipwrecked Greek ships, they found all those things of the ancient times.

Then we were in the summer palace, and that was also very funny. The gardeners had always bells so the women could quickly put their veils on when they came across. Then we came into a big yard, in the palace, and it was like in those fairy tales of A Thousand and One Nights. There was a courtyard, and they were lying there on, kind of--not beds, it was more like couches. They were lying, the beautiful slaves, half-naked, and all that. Mostly they were turned to the wall, sleeping, and we thought how beautiful they looked; also it all was very colorful. But when they turned around, they were all old. [laughter] Very old. Only one or two were young. All those half-naked women were old. Then they brought us inside, and I thought, "Now I will see some beautiful old furniture." But it was all from a Berlin department store--the cheapest things you can imagine. One big table, and everywhere mirrors. Everywhere. All around. But the cheapest things what you can imagine! On a big table there were little knicknacks, for example, porcelain frogs with a wide mouth open, things which in Germany only children liked, or which you could buy at those fiestas where the



people were selling on the ground and the children would be buying those things. Those were the beautiful luxuries which we expected.

WESCHLER: This must have been certainly the most exotic culture you had come in contact with up to that time.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja.

WESCHLER: Did it have any kind of what we call "culture shock" effect on you?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, I was just curious and astonished. I was a little disappointed that I didn't see more beautiful things in this palace. But then I thought maybe in the winter palace there are the beautiful things, and maybe at the summer palace they had only vacation things.

WESCHLER: But this idea of harems and things like that, did that shock you in any special way beyond that?

FEUCHTWANGER: No. We knew that from childhood, those fairy tales from A Thousand and One Nights. That was all too familiar to me. But there was usually one woman who was the real wife. The older women were there--they kept them there even if they didn't like them anymore. Then came the son of the sheikh, and he kissed all the women around, and then he kissed me too. "I am not one of them."

[laughter]

WESCHLER: How did the French consul general and the German consul general get along?



FEUCHTWANGER: I don't know.

But there was something else. We went to Hammamet, where he told us to go. There is a little train, a very small train, which goes through the desert. But we wanted to walk again. We wanted to walk through the desert like the children of Israel, and feel the desert sands. But it was so hot, you can't imagine. The sand was so hot you could cook eggs in the sand, so hot it was. So first we went barefoot, but then put on our shoes again. We were very, very glad when we came finally to Hammamet, because it was really too hot--even for us. Then before we came into the village of Hammamet--that is on a little bay, farther south--we passed the cemetery. The cemetery was in the middle of the sand. It was the end of the desert which then went down to the sea. Down a hillside was the cemetery, and all the monuments, or gravestones, were fallen down. You know, the sand is always moving. It looked so deserted, but so beautiful, these fallen down tombstones, and also very simple, like Jewish tombstones--only round white stones. It was a great impression.

Then we came into the little town, and there we found out that there was only one place where we could stay, at the house of the French consul. He was the only European there. There were only Arabs. We went there, and he had a kind of dude ranch. We were paying guests in this house.





He was a little man, very quiet and unassuming. We lived there, and it was beautiful. They always arranged some excursions. One woman was there; she was the wife of the man who had the biggest newspaper in Tunisia [La Dépêche Tunisienne]. She looked like a peacock. How do you say those birds which are so many colors? No--it's another bird. Cockatoo?

WESCHLER: Parrot?

FEUCHTWANGER: Parrot, yes. She had always dresses like a parrot. Every color what you can imagine was there, loud colors. It was so funny, in this yellow sand; she always sang, she had red hair and was very loud and full-figured. But they were very nice, all of them. And this lady, she was full of life; she always arranged some excursions.

Once, we all had little donkeys, and we went a little farther to some ruins. The donkeys were real small, and one of the men was very long and thin. He had long legs, and--I don't know how--he had the smallest donkey. We had to cross a little river, and all of a sudden the donkey went away from between his legs, and he was standing with wide legs in the middle of the water. The donkey was already on the other side. [laughter] So we had always to laugh a lot of things.

Then one morning, this lady began to shout, "Elle est



acquittée, elle est acquittée!" That means, "She is acquitted." And this was a sensational trial in Paris. Every newspaper was full. Also in Italy we read about it. It was a minister of, I think, finance, and his name was [Joseph] Caillaux. His wife killed a newspaperman [Gaston Calmette] because he wrote against him. It was a big trial, and it could only happen in France. She has been acquitted. She killed out of love. And this lady was so full of jubilation that she was acquitted that it was the first time, I think, I felt something like women's lib, you know--because she was so glad about this, that she was acquitted. This was a very interesting story. In no other country could that have happened. The crime of passion!

WESCHLER: Well, we must be getting close to the beginning of the war.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes. Yes, and then was the Ramadan, the highest festival of the Arabs. It's mostly a whole month in those places because they were still very religious there. They couldn't eat during the day. They ate during the night. They ate and danced and sang, with big drums. You could hear from far the drums and this Arabic singing. Singsong. In the daytime they were hungry and didn't know what to do with themselves, so they came all to the French Consul[ate], where there was a little terrace.



I was sitting there, and they were all around me sitting in a crouching position and looking at me. Some spoke French, and that was all right; but others spoke only Arabic (at least, they pretended to speak only Arabic because they hated the French). One was a wonderful, beautiful man. He was the son of the mayor of Hammamet, and he fell terribly in love--because he was so hungry, probably [laughter]--and he was always sitting there with crossed legs looking at me.

Then right after the Ramadan, one day, the consul, this little old man, came to us and said, "I'm sorry, I have to arrest you." "What happened?" He said, "We are at war with Germany." That's the only news we had. WESCHLER: You had no idea there was a developing crisis at all.

FEUCHTWANGER: No, nothing. We didn't even know about [Gavrilo] Princip and the murder of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand at Sarajevo. So we didn't know anything because the newspapers came so late always. He said, "I have to arrest you." My husband said, "What does it mean?" He said, "You know, you are free. I just had to tell you that." But the next day it was something else. He said, "Now that I have arrested you, I thought if you gave me your word of honor, that that [would be] enough. But you have to go to Tunis; they know that you are here. Probably



you will be prisoners of war." So we went with the little train to Tunis, and this train--that was another period of fear--was filled with...they were [ironically] called "les joyeux," that is, an army of criminals, captive criminals. They were in a whole army together. In Germany, for instance, no criminal could serve in the army. But they had a special army of criminals. The whole train was full of them. They spoke about the Germans, and that they go to war, and one said, "Oh, I'll kill every German I see." We spoke French rather well, but we were afraid our German accents would give us away. We didn't speak much. Anyway, we arrived in Tunis without being killed.

WESCHLER: Were you under guard, or could you have escaped?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, he said he trusts us; there was no guard there. He brought us to the train, and he said, "You go to Tunis, and then you will see what happens there. I can't do more than say you are my prisoners, and you give your word not to escape." So when we got there, we went to the hotel where we lived before already, and...

WESCHLER: You were picked up at the station by someone, or you just went?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, nobody was there. Nobody knew anything. It was a great chaos. It was great chaos because many people left. All the people left who were foreigners--English, or so, and probably many German women. There's





a big German colony there.

But we were in the hotel, and we didn't know what will happen, of course. The next morning, before dawn, the soldiers came and picked up my husband and took all the money we had. It was all in gold coins because we wanted to go to Egypt afterwards. So when we left one country to go to another, we never had to change money because gold was everywhere currency. But they took everything away, and took my husband.

WESCHLER: These were the French soldiers?

FEUCHTWANGER: French soldiers. They took my husband away; that was all. When they knocked on the door, I opened immediately, and this made a good impression, as though we had nothing to hide. I was in my nightgown, and my husband was in the pajamas which I had made. But still, I thought it best to open right away; we didn't take any cover, or so. That made a good impression, and they were very polite. But still I was alone finally, in my room, and I went to the owner of the hotel--it was a small hotel--and told him that I have no money: I cannot keep the room; I cannot pay for it. I said, "Maybe you have somewhere an attic where I could sleep. I'm used to that." But he said, "No, no, you are my guest now. You stay in your room for the time being, and you don't pay. That's all." He gave me also something to eat.



I told him, "I don't know what to do. I would like to go to the German Consulate." Then I found out that the German consul had already fled. He left immediately when he heard that. Then I went there, and there was a Swiss consul there who took over. But he was absolutely without any--he didn't know what to do. He was out of his mind. So many people there wanted something from him, a visa or whatever, and help, and all the Germans were there, and he just didn't know what to do. That never happened before, that there was a war.

WESCHLER: Only German men had been arrested, not German women?

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja, only German men, for the moment at least. Then the next day there was no bread in Tunis, because the bakers were all German. They were all in prison.

WESCHLER: Roughly what day is this? How many days into the war are we right now? A week into the war or something like that?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, it was the first day, and the second day, and the third day, not more. I had some money always sewn in the seam of my dress. It was not for the war; but in case we would be robbed or so, that's something. I had something. This was the only money I had. So the first thing I did with the money was to buy two



tickets to Italy. So even if I didn't know what to do, I thought the best thing what can happen is that we go to Italy if it's possible. So I had two tickets for the next boat. But that was all.

Then I went looking for my husband. This was not well known, not liked, that women run around alone in Tunis. I was young, you know, and good looking. I had a duster, and I had also a shawl, which was like against the dust and the sun, and I put these around my head so nobody could see really if I was old or young. And I went from Pontius to Pilatus--do you know that expression? Finally I found some barracks where I thought they could tell me what happened to the prisoners. I came into the barracks, and there was a very nice young lieutenant who said, "I wouldn't know anything"--I spoke rather well French--"but I give you a soldier to accompany you. Maybe you will find the headquarters. We don't even know exactly where the headquarters are, but I heard as much that it is in a mosque." I knew the mosques were all holy, and that nobody but an Arab or an Islamic could enter a mosque. But anyway, they didn't hear, the French, about that, and they really took a mosque for their headquarters--very beautiful mosque. And this soldier brought me there. But when he saw the two guards--they were from Martinique, probably, enormous mulattos with naked chests and round



scimitars, round swords; they looked just forbidding-- the soldier was so frightened (he was probably from the French provinces) that he ran away and left me there between those two enormous guards. What shall I do? I went in. And they were so astonished they didn't even move. So I went from one room, big room, to the other, and nobody bothered me.

WESCHLER: This was the French military headquarters at that time?

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja. Nobody was there. From one room to another. Finally I met a gentleman in uniform, and he said, "What can I do for you?" I said, "I want to speak with the general." He said, "I am the general." [laughter] He said, "Come in." And I said to him, "I wanted to tell you, my husband has been taken. We are German, and my husband has been taken as a prisoner. But you have to know that my husband and I, we are pacifists. My husband also writes for newspapers, and I heard always from other wars that the correspondents of newspapers are exchanged." Of course, I didn't know that; it was just a bluff. "We love France, and we would never say or do anything against France. We lived a long time there, and liked it so much." And he said, "Yes, that's all very well, but what shall I do?" I said, "Ja, I have to tell you something. You are always called the nation of





culture. But now my husband is in jail and has not even a toothbrush." He said, "This, of course, is very serious." [laughter] He said, "Yes, what shall we do about that?" He said, "Now you have to go home, go to your hotel. I will see to it that your husband gets a toothbrush." [laughter] That was World War I. Ach! I went back to my hotel, rather dejected, and...knocks on the door... and there is, outside...Lion. He says, "I'm coming to get my toothbrush." [laughter] So I said, "Yes, that's all right, but I don't give you your toothbrush. We go now to the Italian boat. I have already the tickets." (My husband had got some papers--I don't know--from the waiter in the hotel, false papers or so.) But my husband said, "You know, I have given my word of honor not to escape. I just came here to get my toothbrush." So I said, "Yes, but that was under stress, under duress. And your word of honor is not binding. So we are going to the port." And that's what we did. We took a taxi and went to the boat, to the Italian ship.

There on the border, first of all, we saw a whole row of young men who were chained to each other. It was the first thing we saw there. I asked them what they are doing--what's the matter? They said, "We are German students, a fraternity. We were on our way to Egypt, and there came a Muslim up to the ship and told us we have to



go down to get our papers stamped. So we went down, and we immediately were arrested, because it was a ruse from the French Arabs." They were standing there all in chains in the heat, and I took their names very clandestinely, so I could do something for them--wrote down their names.

My husband was in the meantime occupied with the luggage which we took with us; they opened everything, of course, at the customs, and we were very much afraid. We had a kind of basket, a woven thing, where we had the dirty linen things and things like that when we were traveling, and there I hid my husband's military document which he had with him. He had to have that. It was the law.

WESCHLER: In Germany.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja. He was a reservist, and everywhere he went he had to have his German [military] passport with him. No other passport was necessary. We had no passport, neither of us, but he had to have his German military identification papers. If not, that was really a kind of deserting and was punished with death, if he had not.... So I had hidden that in this little basket, woven luggage. They took out everything. They didn't find anything, not even money or so. But still we were frightened because we didn't know what happened to this passport. Then a man



came. He was tall and black, with a little beard. He said, "The gentleman with the lady can pass." Nothing else.

WESCHLER: Were you making believe you were French?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, we couldn't make believe that; it would be wrong. That would be dangerous.

WESCHLER: So they knew you were German?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, we didn't show anything. What people didn't ask, we didn't tell them. We just put our luggage there and they opened it, and then this man came and told that. I would assume that he was sent by the general, that it must have been immediately known that we were fleeing, and that he thought--like the French are, he was a gallant man--that we should escape. He didn't know that my husband was a reservist, of course. That would have been another thing.

Anyway, we went to the ship, and we ran inside. We left all our baggage there, because we took the occasion--maybe he takes back his word, you know. So we ran into the ship, and there was the captain of the ship with a big beard, and very solemn. They were our allies, the Italians; it was an Italian ship. We said, "We are German. We want to be taken on your ship. But we left our luggage there. Maybe we can get that luggage." So he said, "You are secure here. You are on Italian territory.



Nothing can happen to you."

At this moment I turned around and saw already the French soldiers coming after us. They said, "We heard that there are Germans here, and we want to get them. There was a steward who heard that and took my husband and threw him down the stairs. He went rolling down into the lowest ship parts. I didn't see Lion anymore. I didn't know what happened. He hid him under the coal sacks. Then he came back and took me by the arm and threw me into a cabin with a lot--about twenty Italian women. Terrible noise, you know, when Italian girls are together. I had this duster on, and I took it off, and I was another woman, of course, without this. So the soldiers came in and said, "Here are Germans!" The Italians said, "What Germans? We are all Italian!" They shouted with the soldiers until they ran away. Then the steward took me out and said, "I have to hide you two in a special compartment. Your husband is safe." Then somebody threw our luggage onto the ship. And this special basket, this woven thing, was full of cuts from bayonets. They had cut into the basket, to see if we had something of value or whatever. So we knew that they meant business. But the funny thing was that even though the captain didn't want to allow the soldiers to come in, they just pushed him aside and went through.





It took two hours until we went out of the waters which belonged still to Tunisia. And those two hours-- it was really something until we came out. There are two fortresses on both sides, and only then were we in the international waters. So as long as it was--even though soldiers were not allowed to go in, it was war and they just did what they wanted to do.

WESCHLER: A couple of questions: about how many Germans were in prison? Do you have any idea?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, many prisoners. It was a big colony, mostly businessmen. My husband told me that he was imprisoned--not in a house but in a cage. It was a big cage where all the people were. The ceiling and the sides were only from iron stakes, and that was all. In the open air.

WESCHLER: In the sun. That must have been very hot.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja. And then the next day they had to free all those who were bakers. They had to free them because there was no bread. My husband told me always that partly it was funny because every time another German [came in], they said, "Good morning." "Good morning." "Good morning." [laughter]

WESCHLER: This was in the city still, or was this outside?

FEUCHTWANGER. It was outside the city, where the prison was. I wasn't there; I didn't know that.



WESCHLER: What were some of his other stories about?

FEUCHTWANGER: The only thing was that on the ship itself one man who was a German had only one arm. Another was a big, tall, and very imposing-looking man; he introduced himself to us as general, a Prussian general. He said, "And I am the only spy." He was a spy. He bragged with that. He was so proud of being a spy that he bragged with it, and then he showed us all his passports. Different passports: French passport, Italian passport, and all kinds of passports. He wanted to be a good friend, but we didn't want to be--with a spy, you know. In those days a spy was not a hero as we later learned in the movies. A spy was something which you don't make company with. He wanted always to sit and drink with us. He invited us to drink wine or champagne.

WESCHLER: Before we leave the shores of Tunis behind, did your husband tell you any more stories about what happened to him during the time that he was in the prison?

FEUCHTWANGER: He wasn't long in prison.

WESCHLER: It was just--what, two days?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, I think it was not more than that.

WESCHLER: Was he maltreated at all?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, they were just very narrow together, mostly younger people. My husband was also young. So they were dejected, but at the same time they made always jokes,



like soldiers do.

WESCHLER: And do you have any sense of what happened to the ones who were left behind?

FEUCHTWANGER: I heard that those of which I took the names-- when we came to Rome I gave the names to the ambassador. I don't know. Because in those days there was so much news which was not true...

WESCHLER: Rumors.

FEUCHTWANGER: Rumors, yes. For instance, in a Tunisian newspaper, there was a story, a headline, that the German emperor raped the czarina, the mother of the czar of Russia; when she went from England to Russia, he raped her. Those things were in the newspapers; so we didn't believe anything. We hoped that it wasn't true, but they said that those fraternity students had been used for work on public roads and so, and that all died from exposure. But we don't know it. I never heard from them again, any time.

WESCHLER: And you don't know any of the other people, what happened to them?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, I don't think that the civilians had anything to fear. It was only those who were soldiers, you know, or the age of soldiers that they kept.

WESCHLER: Also, you said that you were pacifists to the general. Was that just a story, or was that really...?



FEUCHTWANGER: No, that was real.

WESCHLER: That was the case. Was it common for people of your generation to be pacifist?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, there probably were many pacifists, but they didn't dare to say it, to tell it, because Germany was a military country. The military was the big thing there. They were not very well paid; they usually had to marry rich, the lieutenants and so. But there was nothing which was higher than a military man, an officer.

WESCHLER: Was your pacifism something that you had really thought out and talked about a great deal, or was it just more or less how you were?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, it was just--it was so natural to us.

WESCHLER: Would you say it was primarily based on--you've talked about l'art pour l'art; was it more an aesthetic viewpoint?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, I don't think so, no. It was human feeling.

WESCHLER: It was a humanistic feeling.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja.

WESCHLER: Just very quickly looking ahead, would you say that you remained true to those feelings your entire life, or did they change?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, they didn't change. But we were patriotic, in a way. I cannot deny that. We were glad when





there was a victory. At first, not long. But at first we were at least--I don't think that we were glad, but we were imposed to hear about how the soldiers went so far. Also so many Jews were volunteers, like this Ludwig Frank from Mannheim, the parliamentarian. And he was once of the first who went as a volunteer. We didn't know exactly, but we didn't think much about it. We were German, and we were at war, and we had to shut our mouth like we did before. But we had to do that before already, because when somebody wrote something against the king, he went to jail.

WESCHLER: Getting on the boat, again: it probably is the first moment you have to think about what was taking place. What did World War I look like as it first started? Did it seem as though it was going to last four years, or did people...?

FEUCHTWANGER: At first we had to go through Italy. We arrived in Palermo. We had no money to buy tickets to go to Germany, so we went to the German consul there. It was still peace there. And he said, "Oh, that's fine, that you are here. But, money?" He opened his safe, and there was not a cent in it. So he said, "You know the banks all closed immediately in the panic. There is no bank open. We cannot have any money." So he said, "But I write out for you a ticket." My husband--it was



again good that we had this military passport. "Since you are a soldier, you can ride home with your wife without paying for it. At least you have the trip." We had some small money. Outside of the consulate, there were lots of women and children there, and they all were very hungry, and we shared with them whatever we had. It was just natural that we couldn't eat when others are hungry. So we had always less and less.

Finally we came then to Rome, and went to the ambassador, and said, "Can we have some money?" He opened his safe, "Look in." [laughter] But it was a little better then, and we got a ticket for riding every train. There was nothing to do. Rome was empty and quiet because all the foreigners went away. The hotels were empty. We went into the museum. We went to the famous Venus, which was there--the Venus de Milo. It was on a turntable, and the turntable was already full of spiderwebs. The turntable was affixed to the wall with spiderwebs, so solitary it was. And then there was the Roman gladiator. It is a famous sculpture of a dying Gaul. He was lying there, and Gaul is France, you know. And one of the big toes was lying on the pedestal where he was, where the sculpture was. My husband had the feeling he should take this big toe as a souvenir. It was so symbolic, you know, that he was lying there dying, the symbol of France. But Lion left



the toe there.

WESCHLER: Did you at that time feel that the war was going to last as long as it was going to, or did it seem to be...?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, we thought we will be victorious.

Of course, the German army was so well known, and the great battleships, and so. For what had we paid all the taxes? Or at least a part of them.

WESCHLER: What did the war seem to be about at that point?

FEUCHTWANGER: First, it was only victories. Victories, victories.



TAPE NUMBER: VI, SIDE ONE

JULY 3, 1975

WESCHLER: We are going very quickly to get into World War I but first we have a couple of stories to tell; we have already told part of them, but we want to tell a little bit more. One of them is a good ways back, and that has to do with Monte Carlo. We have talked already about the pirated performance of Parsifal which took place there, but you had some interesting anecdotes to tell--about the long intermission, for example. You might just tell that.

FEUCHTWANGER: And also about the terribly fat singer who played Kundry. She was so fat that nobody could sit still. Everybody laughed. She had a beautiful voice, but she was so fat, it was just grotesque. She was there to seduce Parsifal. It was not long before a very long intermission was called and everybody rushed into the casino to gamble. But even those who stayed there at the tables where they gambled could hear the opera going on; and vice versa, the people at the opera could hear the chips falling at the tables.

WESCHLER: And this is particularly true with some of the lyrics.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja. Because, for instance, Wagner said,





"Let sanctity be over us."

WESCHLER: And in the background you heard the chips.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, in the background you heard the chips.

[pause in tape]

WESCHLER: The other thing we wanted to pick up on was Erich Mühsam who, you remember, was the anarchist who was able to go between the two tables at the Torggelstube.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja. He was liked by everybody because he was such a mild man. And this mild man called himself an anarchist; also he wrote anarchistic articles and even had a little magazine or periodical which was called Kain-- [the name was from] Cain and Abel--and it had a red cover.

WESCHLER: You just told me about his Villon-like existence.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja. He was from a very rich family, but he went away. He was from Hamburg, where there are very strict people, and he went to Munich and lived the life of a very poor Bohemian. He never had money because he did not work much; he wrote, but this was only for his own periodical, and he didn't make much money. People bought it usually just to help him. He always borrowed money from his friends--that's how he lived. He reminded me a little bit of François Villon because he too wrote poems. He was, I think, the very first man I met who was for women's liberation. It had something to do with the equality of



people. In those days, it was anarchistic. He could go to every prostitute, and they did it for nothing for him because he was so nice to them and treated them like ladies.

WESCHLER: What was the feminist movement like in Munich at the turn of the century?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, there was no feminist movement. He was the only one and the first one. There was no movement. He didn't even know that he was a feminist. It was more about the equality of people; he was for those who were condemned by society and who were sometimes just poor girls who didn't know what to do. He treated them like human beings, or even like ladies, and that is why he was so popular with them.

WESCHLER: You were going to tell about this man, Lieutenant Köhler.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes. Mühsam had a friend who was a lieutenant who came from the war, and I didn't like him at all. He looked rough. He was good looking, tall and blond, and he had something which--something "beefy" maybe you could call it--and he was a great friend of Mühsam. Nobody could understand how the two could get along. He always said jokingly to Mühsam, "You will end on the gallows." But everybody laughed about it, and it was just a quarrel between friends. But in the end, when the Nazis came....



I should tell you that Köhler fell in love with me and always kneeled before me and cried because he had no success. I had more disgust about that than I was against his roughness. He was a sadist and a masochist at the same time. Later, under the Nazis, he became a Gauleiter, a leader of a great district, and he had great power. Mühsam was already then in jail, because he was always in and out of jail. During the [First World] War they said he was crazy and they couldn't use him as a soldier, so he was always free and nobody took him seriously as an anarchist. But when the revolution came, he went to every barracks and told the soldiers not to follow anymore the commands of the kaiser. Everyone said, "Oh, our Mühsam, we like him," and they carried him on their shoulders. [laughter] They never took him seriously: they just liked him. This was the "bloody anarchist." [laughter] Since he wrote always those things against the king, he was several times in jail, but not for long; they just considered him crazy. But under the Nazis, they took him seriously. His friend knew that he was in jail, and had him murdered--assassinated. He was found hanged in his cell.

WESCHLER: This was Lieutenant Köhler.

FEUCHTWANGER: And this was his friend Köhler who was a Gauleiter in the district where he lived. Later on, during the Nuremburg Trials, he was condemned to death. So he



must have been someone important. They didn't condemn the little people to death, just the leaders.

WESCHLER: What did Mühsam look like?

FEUCHTWANGER: He was tall and thin, very pale, and had a long thin red beard and very bushy red hair. He had glasses which did not always sit on the right place; they were always crooked on his nose. Even with his red hair and all his speeches, nobody believed him that he was dangerous.

WESCHLER: But now, you say, he is a little bit better known.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja. His writings have been printed again. He wrote a beautiful German, the language; and although some of his ideas are, of course, influenced by great anarchists and great communists, he could describe the ideas very well. Also he made poems, and that's why he reminded me a little bit of François Villon. [pause in tape]

WESCHLER: Let's start now where we left off. We had you in Rome without any money. How did you get to Munich?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes. The ambassador had no money either because the banks were closed. But we had a little money, of course--not enough to buy the ticket but just enough to eat. With the other Germans who were around us, we divided what we had, and we ate just bread; that was the





only thing we could buy. Then the ambassador gave us a letter of recommendation so that we could at least go on the train without paying for the tickets. Italy was still our ally, the German ally, and he wrote in this letter that my husband had to go into the army. So we could go to the Austrian border, and there the letter was also honored by the Austrians. Then we arrived in Munich, finally.

WESCHLER: You arrived in Munich in mid-September.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, about that time.

WESCHLER: What happened when you arrived there?

FEUCHTWANGER: When we arrived, we took the cheapest quarters we could find, very near the station so we didn't have to pay for the tram. Then we walked to my parents' house, which was on the other side of the city. They had just come back from a walk; and, of course, you can imagine--they hadn't seen us for such a long time--they were absolutely speechless. Also, they didn't recognize the danger that my husband had to go to war, so they just were glad that we were back. The family of my husband was not very pleased, because my husband had been so long away without earning any money, and also everything was in an uproar. All of his brothers were already in the army. One was on the front.

WESCHLER: Which brother was on the front?

FEUCHTWANGER: It was the third one, Martin. He was already



before in the army as an einjährig. Those who had studied had only to serve one year; others had to serve two years. He was one of those who had only served a year, but the first day [of the war] he was sent to the front. The next brother [Ludwig] was a reservist and was also in uniform already. The third brother [Fritz] had the factory and was indispensable because the factory was important for the nourishment of the people. The fourth brother was also in the infantry and was soon to be sent to the front; that was the youngest who later became this hero.

WESCHLER: Had any of the families yet experienced any tragedies?

FEUCHTWANGER: The one who was the first in the army became a prisoner of war and had a very bad time. They were starved to death as prisoners because France itself had not much to eat since so much was invaded by the Germans and destroyed by the war. So, of course, the prisoners were not well treated.

WESCHLER: Did you know any of the ones who were early prisoners?

FEUCHTWANGER: Who came back, you mean? Oh, yes, lots of people. But that was four years later.

WESCHLER: So gradually people were beginning to realize the gravity of the war.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja.



WESCHLER: You mentioned that the Social Democratic party...

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, my husband was very disappointed in the Social Democratic party. They were known as against the kaiser and against the military, and they had a very good leadership; and Lion was hoping that they would oppose the war. But they immediately rallied around the kaiser. Only in France, their leader, Jean Jaurès, was against the war, but he was assassinated immediately. So there was nobody who could prevent anything.

WESCHLER: Had Lion been a member of the Social Democratic party previously?

FEUCHTWANGER: No. He was very apolitical. Not only he, because every intellectual was apolitical. I could even say the whole population was apolitical. The Germans were working people, and they were learning people. Even the simple people liked to learn and read. But in the newspaper no one would ever read anything about political events. They read what was underneath the important things-- in the feuilleton, they called it, the critics about the theater or about art or stories or short stories. Politics was just not known and not interesting. That was also a great danger. There was nobody who could oppose it. Then there was, of course, also censorship, and those like Frank Wedekind, who wrote many poems in the Simplicissimus-- this comical periodical, more comical than serious, a



satirical newspaper with beautiful illustrations by great artists; it was a magazine, more or less, and came out once a week.... Wedekind made some poems which were considered lese majesty, and he was sent to jail. But not to a "real" jail. In those days--for instance, when a military man committed something wrong in his profession--they were sent into a fortress. And so Wedekind was also sent into a fortress as a prisoner. It was a kind of honorary prison.

WESCHLER: You mentioned that your husband was upset with the Social Democratic party. What was the Social Democratic party in German politics at that point? Did it really matter what they said? They weren't in power.

FEUCHTWANGER: They were finally a lot of people. You remember maybe that [Otto von] Bismarck had already great trouble with the Social Democrats. I remember that before Bismarck died--but I was still a child--he did some things to get some of the power from them [by backing] a socialist edict which was kind of [social] security or insurance. That was a great deed of Bismarck. But he did it because he was a great politician; he didn't do it just for humanity. One of the best known socialists in those days was a young man in Mannheim, which was in the principality of Baden in South Germany. He was a deputy of the parliament. I had a cousin [Sally Löffler] who





came sometimes to visit us from Mannheim, and he was the only person I have ever met who was interested in politics in those days. Everybody else spoke with great contempt about the socialists--everybody--they were very unpopular. They were called "the Reds," only "the Reds."

WESCHLER: This is the Social Democratic party?

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja. I asked him why and he told me about this man in Mannheim. His name was Ludwig Frank. He was a deputy at the parliament, and he was a Jew, a young Jew. I asked my cousin, "How could it be possible if you say he is an intelligent man and that you have met him and were impressed with him--how could he be a Red?" The Reds always had red ties on, you know. Everybody was so much in contempt of them. I, of course, just repeated what I had heard; I was still just a child. Then he said a very funny thing: he told me when somebody wants to go ahead in politics, he cannot go ahead except if he goes to the Socialist party.

WESCHLER: What did he mean?

FEUCHTWANGER: He couldn't go into politics except through the Socialist party.

WESCHLER: But I should think that in the Socialist party, you still didn't get very far ahead.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, but still--oh, yes, he was a deputy. He was a deputy in the parliament of Baden. (I think



Mannheim was the capital then of Baden.) But anyway, he immediately became patriotic like the others and was one of the first who volunteered and went to the front, and also one of the first to die in the war.

WESCHLER: You mentioned that he was Jewish. What was the response of the Jews? Did they become very patriotic?

FEUCHTWANGER: They were absolutely the same as the others. As I say, they too spoke only contemptible about the socialists. That's why I asked my cousin how a Jew could become a socialist, and he said that was the only way to go ahead and get into politics. Frank became a member of the parliament, but he was also like the others and became a patriot. He was one of the first to die. The Jews always mention that so many Jews died during the First World War in comparison to their [number in] the population as a whole. Only 1 percent of the population were Jews, and about 10 percent became soldiers--and also died in the war. But it didn't help them: they thought it would help during the Nazi time, but it didn't. Except my husband's youngest brother: he had some protection in the beginning because he had the First-Class Iron Cross. Hitler later pretended to have it, too, but it was not true: he had only the second-class cross.

WESCHLER: You talked about the green garlands of the soldiers...

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, the first impression. We were desperate



when we saw this. The soldiers were all in trucks going to the station--to the war--and they sang. Green garlands were around the trucks, and the population was jubilant. The whole thing was absolutely frightening, because we knew that they went to war, they went to their death. They were just singing. Loud singing and jubilant. I thought it was to forget the danger, but later we heard that it was that they were ordered to sing. This was one of the most terrible things I had ever seen until then. My husband also spoke about the Roman times of the Emperor Nero, when the slaves who had to die--either they were torn by the lions or they had to battle each other with the sword as gladiators--when they came into the circus, how they had to go before the emperor and speak in chorus, "Morituri te salutant," which meant, "Dying, we greet you." That's what Lion mentioned when he saw those young boys being driven to the station. [pause in tape]

Soon one cousin of my husband [Markus] came back from the war. He was very seriously wounded, and his parents [Louis and Sophie Feuchtwanger] were allowed to go to the city where he was at the hospital. He died before their eyes, shouting and cursing in the most terrible ways, in words that his parents had never heard before.

WESCHLER: What effect did this have on the parents?

FEUCHTWANGER: They came back. They were almost not human



beings anymore. They were absolutely destroyed from the experience.

WESCHLER: So gradually the war was becoming more real for you.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, it was, of course. Very soon you saw people going around with bandages or without legs. Also, the funny thing was that right when the war became real, there was this terrible fear of spies. Once--we had two hats, both of us had white felt hats, like stetsons, and we wanted to use them still before the winter (in those days everybody had to have a hat), and they needed new ribbons. So we went to the shop, and the saleslady saw inside, "Geneva."

WESCHLER: The label said, "Geneva."

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, and this is French Switzerland. As soon as she saw this, she ran to the door and shouted into the street, "Spies, spies! Arrest the spies!" Lots of people came and surrounded us, and it was rather dangerous--they were menacing and threatening to beat us. The police came and asked my husband for his passport, and he showed his military passport. They recognized his name because they read about our experience when we escaped as prisoners of war. They could tell the people, "Those are good people. He even escaped from the French!" All of a sudden, the whole thing turned around, and they began to





sing and shout and wish us well. They accompanied us back to our house where we lived. First it was so dangerous, and then it was so comical also.

WESCHLER: Well, let's get back to that. We haven't yet talked about how--I take it Lion enlisted immediately.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, he had to enlist immediately, but because he had this experience with escaping and so, he got a furlough for a while, and he used that to begin to work right away.

WESCHLER: Well, how was it known? You said it had been mentioned in the newspapers.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, it was in the newspapers about the whole thing. That's why all those policemen knew about it. For that he got an immediate furlough, because they thought he deserved it after his experience, and he used it to begin with his work right away.

WESCHLER: What work did he begin at that point?

FEUCHTWANGER: First he wrote some theater critical reviews for Berlin, for the Schaubühne, where he had written before. Also he was interested in hatred: all of a sudden, people hated each other who until then went along real well. Most of all, it was the hate against England. There were hate songs written--the English were the most contemptible people; they were all criminals--and this was all there was in the newspapers. So my husband thought, "Isn't it



funny?" He didn't know much about the English--he was never in England--but first we went along well. We admired the writers; Shakespeare was played in no country so much as in Germany--and now... He began to be interested in the whole people and why they should be hated so much. He began to look more at their historians, [Thomas] Macaulay and [Thomas] Carlyle, and he read about what happened during the colonial times and also about Hastings. Warren Hastings was one of the colonialists in India, the governor of India. This interested him very much, because it was the history of England. But he also was interested at the same time about what Warren Hastings found in India. So he began to read Indian cultural writings and most of all the plays and the literature. Then he found also that Goethe liked one of the plays that was called Sakuntala. Goethe had even written verses about this indisch play. So Lion read Sakuntala and found at the same time a play that was not known before and was called Vasantasena. So he wrote two plays, one after the other; but that was not all at once, of course. No...I think it's a little too far where I go now.

When he first thought about the English and about this hate against England, he remembered that he read a play by Aeschylus called The Persians. So then he read again in Greek this play. Aeschylus had been at war



himself, had even invented some war machines. Then Lion found in this play that the Persians, who were the enemies of the Greeks, were treated so fantastically well and humanly by Aeschylus; he never said a word against the Persians. Finally at the end of the Persian Wars, the Greeks were victorious, and there was not a single word of contempt or hate against the Persians. Lion thought he should put that as an example of how you have to behave even against an enemy. So he began to translate from the Greek into German; he had to do that in distichen, hexameter and pentameter, and that was, of course, more or less a new play. He was very satisfied to have found that, to have seen how an enemy should be treated with more dignity.

WESCHLER: So this was the first thing he did.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, it was the first. He sent this to the Schaubühne in Berlin, this periodical. They were very enthusiastic about it, and they printed the whole thing at once in a serial.

WESCHLER: How did people react to that?

FEUCHTWANGER: It was printed there and also in another periodical called Die Zukunft ("The Future"). They printed part of it, and it made a great splash through the literature in Germany. Maximilian Harden, the editor of this periodical, was a famous politician and essayist before already. He went around lecturing about politics.



He was rather conservative and a great admirer of Bismarck.  
[pause in tape]

WESCHLER: So it was printed in both of these journals.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja. And everybody paid attention because Maximilian Harden was a literary giant in those days, politically and as a writer. So the theater in Munich, the avant-garde theater [the Schauspielhaus], became aware of this Persians and asked my husband if they could perform it. Of course, it was a very great event for us. This was the first performance in a serious theater for my husband, and it was just when he was at the military service. Everywhere on the streets was propaganda, the posters about The Persians, adapted by Lion Feuchtwanger. This was very funny: once, when he was in his shabby uniform, he was very tired, and he came home; and he was sitting in the electric streetcar, and a general came in. Of course, my husband jumped up to make room for him; the man must have seen how tired my husband was, and he said, "Oh, keep seated, my boy." It was just when they passed this poster of The Persians. So there are many contrasts in our lives.

WESCHLER: The period when he wrote this was when he was on furlough.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja. He wrote it on the furlough. But in the meantime, it has been printed and accepted.





WESCHLER: How long was the furlough?

FEUCHTWANGER: Not very long, about one month.

WESCHLER: And then what happened?

FEUCHTWANGER: After the furlough, he had to go into the army. In the beginning they were allowed to go home to sleep. He had a uniform which was absolutely--it was threadbare. He had bronze buttons and black boots, and he had to polish them every day. They were usually very muddy. So he came home and was so tired that I had difficulty getting his boots off him. He immediately fell asleep when he came home. Then I polished his buttons and cleaned his boots; he got shoe polish which was so hard and dry that he had to spit in it to get it softer.

[laughter] That was our lives then.

WESCHLER: Which regiment was he in?

FEUCHTWANGER: He was in the Regiment Koenig. It was the best regarded regiment: "King," it was called. His sergeant always said they had to be very proud to carry the coat of the king--this was the uniform. It was threadbare, and my husband's mother once said, "I think you should have a brighter uniform." But Lion said, "If the coat is good enough for my king, it's good enough for me." That was his kind of rebellion: if he had to be a soldier, he didn't want to have a nice uniform.

WESCHLER: The training sounds like it was quite brutal.



FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, it was really brutal because it was also so cold. It was the coldest winter for many, many years. Munich has a cold climate already, and it was always frozen or very wet. His sergeant always said, "A soldier has to be trained in the dry and in the wet, and they have to throw themselves in the biggest puddle." It was so cold that when they went back to the barracks, the uniform was frozen hard onto their bodies. Also he had a hernia; he became a hernia from this, and later on, he had to be operated on. But as soon as he was better, he had to stay as a soldier. Even when he was on furlough, every month he had to go there and be examined. For four years he was always a soldier.

But once when it was so cold--they always got their breakfast in the yard because there was not enough room in the barracks; he had to stand in the yard in line for the so-called coffee. It was served in tin cans, and there was no warm water to wash the vessels. For dinner they had had very fat pork. In Bavaria, people always ate fat pork. This was in the same tin can, and they couldn't wash the fat out. The next morning the pork fat was served on top of the acorn coffee. So his stomach, which was never very strong, rebelled, and his ulcers became bleeding ulcers, and he vomited blood. Then he had to be sent into the hospital. But nobody told me where he was or so. Nobody



told me anything; I just didn't know where he was. Bust after two days there was a soldier before my door who said he is sent by Mr. Feuchtwanger to tell me he was in the hospital. This soldier was a peasant who never was before in Munich, and he had looked for two days to find the street on which I lived. So finally, at least, I heard where I could find him. When I came to the hospital, the first thing I saw in the bed ward was that a lot of nuns were kneeling in the middle of the ward because a soldier had just died. They left everything and just kneeled down and prayed. They all came from the war, the soldiers, and there was no rest at night: they were shouting and screaming and also drinking sometimes.

WESCHLER: When you arrived at the hospital, what condition was Lion in?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, he was very weak. The doctors finally thought it would not be good for him to stay in the hospital with all this noise. So they told him he could go home and I could take care of him, with a doctor. But not before he had signed a document that he was not asking for any pay or damages because he became so sick. He would have a right to a pension or so, but he had to renounce it.

WESCHLER: What happened to the regiment?

FEUCHTWANGER: When his comrades had been sent to the front, the first day they all died. There was a combined artillery



attack: they went out by train, the train was shot at, and they all died the first day. It was the first day when they were sent out that my husband came to the hospital. So in a way it saved his life. [pause in tape]

WESCHLER: We paused for a couple minutes and remembered some other stories from this period, before he got sick even, so you might tell us some of those.

FEUCHTWANGER: There was something else: first, he was allowed to sleep at home, and it was a blessing in a way because at least he had a clean bed. But it didn't last long. My husband was nearsighted, and in every case he saluted everybody who had a cap, or what looked like they had a military cap. So either it was the mailman or the porter of a hotel or whoever had a cap--he saluted them. Just to be sure. Many of his comrades were from the countryside, and they didn't care about that. So soon one lieutenant was not greeted in the right way, there was a big scandal, and this permission to sleep at home was canceled. So everybody had to stay at the barracks overnight [every night thereafter]. It was a terrible thing; that's why he became ill later.

My husband also told me about this sergeant, when he was target shooting. Since he was nearsighted, he never found the target; and the sergeant was very angry about the loss of so much munition. He said, "What are you in





private life?" My husband said, "I am a writer and a Ph.D." So the sergeant said, "Try it again." He tried it again, and the sergeant said, "What did you hit?" My husband said, "The first circle." And he said, "You hit the target, you stupid idiot!"

WESCHLER: So, he had a hard life. You also mentioned a story about an actor who was an important officer.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja. That was also a very funny story.

Once, it was terrible weather, very icy, and they had to go through the whole city with their rifles. My husband had to carry two rifles--he came back from this exercise--because one of his comrades who was lying beside him was injured and he had to take the rifle. He almost couldn't walk because the ice was so slippery. The man in front of him also slipped all the time and always hit him over the head with his rifle. So finally my husband thought it best to go a little slower and found himself all alone behind the whole column with his two guns. A little old lady came up to him and said, "You poor soldier; here, take a pretzel." But my husband--first of all, it wasn't allowed to do that, and even with two rifles, he couldn't take it. Then one of the soldiers hit him over the head, and he lost his helmet. He didn't know what to do: should he pick up the helmet, but then he would fall out of the row, or should he...? He thought that he would let it go, and there was no helmet.



So he was even without a helmet. He came through a main street in the neighborhood of the Torggelstube, where all his friends always were. Some were just outside, and they saw him coming there, and they had to hold their sides from laughing to see my husband stumbling behind the whole army.

WESCHLER: Off tape, you told me the story of his coming upon a former friend of his, an actor, who he saluted.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, that was also.... This actor [Gustav Waldan, Baron von Rummel] was not a former friend; he was always a friend. He was from the royal aristocracy, and he was a colonel immediately. My husband had to stand at attention before a colonel. This actor just didn't know what to do: here he was, this very feared critic--everybody was afraid of his sharp wit--and he was standing so poor and so shabby. The actor was in his beautiful uniform, and it was a very awkward situation. Later he apologized to Lion and said, "What could I do? I couldn't tell you, 'Come with me, my friend. Let's go together.'" [laughter]

WESCHLER: Do you think that Lion's sickness was partly a result of--first of all, he had always been fairly weak....

FEUCHTWANGER: He was not very weak, but his stomach was weak.

WESCHLER: I see. That's attributed to the great fights



that he used to have at the family dinner table.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, it was very much, because the whole family had those. But he was much better in Italy. I think it was because we had so little to eat; it was probably very good for him.

WESCHLER: Also I'm wondering whether in a way it was also his horror at the war.

FEUCHTWANGER: Maybe it contributed to that, but it was mostly really the stomach which could not digest this pork fat which was swimming, resting, on top of the coffee. It was also, of course, rather disgusting to drink that. But since he was used to all kind of hardships, it wouldn't have been so bad. But it was really that his stomach couldn't stand it. He tried his best: he never excused himself. His sergeant, for instance, told him once, "Tonight we have a bid exercise, a great march. Are you coming with us?" Because he knew that my husband was not as strong as those other boys from the countryside. But my husband never excused himself. He always went with them, and of course it was probably too much.



TAPE NUMBER: VI, SIDE TWO

JULY 7, 1975

WESCHLER: Today we are going to continue to talk about World War I. We might begin with one more story of the shenanigans of the German Army, and this one concerns a rather pompous sergeant.

FEUCHTWANGER: Well, [this sergeant was going] to introduce the men into military life. He said, "It's a great honor to carry the king's coat. No serious criminal had ever been admitted to the army. You could say the whole army consists of only slightly convicted men."

WESCHLER: And he meant it seriously.

FEUCHTWANGER: Of course, he meant it seriously. He just was not a good speaker.

WESCHLER: Moving from the army--we talked fairly extensively during the last interview about how Lion had his first leave during which he wrote The Persians, a furlough before he entered, and that then he was in for a while before he took ill and was on leave again.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, but I should tell you before something which is also rather comical. When they had been sworn in, everybody had to go in front of the company, stand at attention, and shout loudly, "I am a Catholic and a Bavarian," or, "I am a Protestant and a Prussian."





My husband had to go there and say, "I'm a Bavarian and a non-Christian."

WESCHLER: It wasn't anti-Semitism?

FEUCHTWANGER: Absolutely not. You just had to tell, because it also was for the church. It was so everybody would be sent to the right church.

WESCHLER: He was sent to the non-Christian church.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes. [laughter]

WESCHLER: Today I'd like to start by talking a little bit about the literary community in Germany and how they were responding to the war. I'll just mention a couple of names and you can perhaps tell any stories that occur to you about them. The first that comes to mind is Frank Wedekind. He was still in Munich?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, he was always in Munich, except that he went to Berlin sometimes when he had a first night at the theater. And at the Torggelstube one day, after they invaded Louvain--this is a city in Belgium, you know; and when they invaded Belgium, this city, which is an ancient city and the pride of Belgium, was destroyed by artillery--we were all sitting very dejected around the table, and all of a sudden Wedekind said, "I'm afraid the Germans will lose the war, and that will be a blessing for humanity." Also he said, "How terrible would that be if it were Germany above all of us."



WESCHLER: "Deutschland über alles." Germany above everyone.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja. It could not be in the interest of humanity that Germany would win the war.

WESCHLER: Do you think that was a common feeling among the intelligentsia?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, very few felt like that. And also those who could have felt it, they didn't dare even admit it to themselves. Patriotism was the word of the day.

WESCHLER: Could you give some examples of alternative examples? For instance, did you know Heinrich Mann?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, Heinrich Mann also was very much against. He was also at our tables. He wrote Der Untertan [The Subject], which was a novel which was immediately forbidden by the censors. Heinrich Mann and Thomas Mann were not in very good standing because Thomas Mann was rather conservative and Heinrich Mann was very avant-gardish, also in his political thoughts. Thomas Mann even wrote a book against Heinrich Mann, against his brother.

WESCHLER: Reflections of a Non-Political Man. [Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen].

FEUCHTWANGER: And there he speaks about civil culture. It was against Heinrich Mann. Civil Literatur. They didn't speak with each other. There were two kind of camps, one around Thomas Mann, including Bruno Frank and Wilhelm



Speyer; and, for instance, when Gerhard Hauptmann, the playwright, came to Munich, he belonged to this part. The other, around Heinrich Mann, was our circle; Heinrich Mann and Wedekind were good friends and they belonged together.

But my husband told me about his friendship [with Heinrich Mann], which dated from long before we knew each other, about when they were together in the Torggellstube and Heinrich Mann lived very poorly in a poor street. They went together--my husband accompanied him home because they still had not debated enough during the evening--and all of a sudden Heinrich Mann stopped and said, "How about letting our water now?" So they went in a corner and did this business. In those days, everybody could do that in the middle of the street, except that people would look; it was only if it was a very deserted street. They finally arrived in the room which Heinrich Mann had rented, and there was one single chair except it was full of books; so they had to sit together on this iron bed and continue the whole night to speak. He said that it was heartbreaking to see this great man--and also this great gentleman--in so much poverty. It smelled of poor onion soup and things like that. And he was the son of a great senator.

WESCHLER: Were both of the Manns in Munich during this



period?

FEUCHTWANGER: They were both in Munich, but Thomas Mann married into a very rich family and so he lived as a great monseigneur, and Heinrich Mann lived so poor.

WESCHLER: Were you also familiar with Thomas Mann personally at all?

FEUCHTWANGER: We knew him and also his wife, but since we belonged to the Heinrich Mann part, so we were not very well--we were not near as friends; they met us only socially.

WESCHLER: I'm trying to think of some other people who were important politically, not necessarily just in Munich. We were talking before about Hermann Hesse in Switzerland.

FEUCHTWANGER: But he lived in Switzerland, and he didn't care anything about what happened in Germany.

WESCHLER: The image today of Hermann Hesse was that he was against the war....

FEUCHTWANGER: He was against the war, yes, but he never spoke out against it, never made any statements against the war.

WESCHLER: How was he generally received?

FEUCHTWANGER: I don't know. In our circle they rather laughed about him because they found him petit bourgeois. But he was required reading in the schools in those days.

WESCHLER: And that already was one stroke against him.





FEUCHTWANGER: I wouldn't say that, no. We were very much in awe of authority in Germany. It was not like here. We were not skeptical at all.

WESCHLER: The other great pacifist of literary figures of that time was Romain Rolland.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes. He was, of course, hated, but nobody spoke about him. He was French, although he lived, I think, mostly in Switzerland. But a very funny story happened much later: when we couldn't go back to Germany, during the Nazi time, the great woman writer from Sweden, Selma Lagerlöf--she was world-famous--she wanted to know what happened to Lion. She didn't know where he was or where to find him. She only thought that hopefully he could escape and she wanted to write to him. So she wrote to Lion Feuchtwanger, care of Romain Rolland, Geneva, Switzerland. And it arrived there. We lived in the south of France, but we got it. No. She said, "Lion Feuchtwanger, écrivain célèbre"--which meant "famous writer"--care of Romain Rolland, Geneva, Switzerland. [laughter]

WESCHLER: At that time, though, even people like Wedekind and Heinrich Mann and so forth did not like Rolland?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, yes, very much, of course. But he was not available, you know. He was just in a country with which we were at war. There was not the least possibility for correspondence, even to write letters.



WESCHLER: Who were some of the others?

FEUCHTWANGER: [Walter] Rathenau came once to the Torggelstube. He knew Wedekind from Berlin from his plays. He came once to the Torggelstube to meet him there. They didn't go into the houses or apartments; they just met at the Torggelstube, or at a certain coffee house which was called the Café Stephanie where all the Bohemians and the writers and the actors were there: rich ones and poor ones, everyone was there who had something to do with art or literature.

WESCHLER: The other important figure to talk about, I suppose, and his views about the war, is Lion. This brings up the subject of his poem, his antiwar poem.

FEUCHTWANGER: The poem he wrote in 1915 and it was published in the Weltbühne.

WESCHLER: What was it called?

FEUCHTWANGER: "The Song of the Fallen" ["Lied der Gefallenen"]. I have it translated and can give you a version.

WESCHLER: How did that come about?

FEUCHTWANGER: It has been translated when the play Thomas Wendt has been translated; it has been published here [under the title 1918] in Three Plays.

WESCHLER: I mean, how did the poem itself come about?

FEUCHTWANGER: It was called the first revolutionary poem



which ever has been written in Germany because it was about the fallen who rot in the dirt in the earth. And it says, "Woe to those who made us lie here"--something like that.

WESCHLER: I'm surprised that that was allowed to be published.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, in Munich it wouldn't have been allowed, but in Berlin they were a little [more lenient]. Also I don't think they understood what it meant. So those who would not like it, they didn't understand; while those who liked it, they wouldn't denounce it. Also this periodical was only read by theater people mostly.

WESCHLER: I believe it was already early in 1915 when that was written.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja, in 1915. Later on, this periodical was taken over by [Karl von] Ossietzky after the founder, [Siegfried] Jacobsohn, died. Ossietzky later on was in a concentration camp against Hitler; he was a nobleman and was against Hitler, but he didn't leave Germany. He said, "I cannot leave Germany. I have to stay here." Since he was not Jewish, he thought at least he wouldn't go into a concentration camp, [that] he could do something against Hitler, at least in the underground. But he was sent into the concentration camp and tortured; they let



him out just before he died because they didn't want.... He got the Nobel Peace Prize during his stay in the camp, so they let him out to die. This was the man who took over the Weltbühne. And it still exists. His wife was until recently also the publisher, but she died last year, over eighty years old. I visited her twice in Germany. We were very good friends, and she sent me some of the letters her husband wrote out from the concentration camp.

WESCHLER: Which you still have?

FEUCHTWANGER: I have them, ja, ja. And also a picture of him.

WESCHLER: Could you talk a little bit about the operations of the censor. Who exactly was the censor?

FEUCHTWANGER: The censor was above everything, even above the police. Everything what my husband wrote was first forbidden. But he had some admirers in the Bavarian literature who were more or less very Bavarian--not known outside of Bavaria, but they had a great role socially and also politically in Bavaria. They had by chance read--one of them, Michael Georg Conrad was his name; he was rather "an old libertine," as they called them, from 1848, and he had read this play, Warren Hastings, which also was forbidden. He wrote to the censor and said, "It would be a political good deed to perform this play." Nobody really understood what it meant; first they thought





that it could not be played because it was about an Englishman, and it was also full of admiration for this Englishman. Finally, Conrad had such a good influence, also such a good name, that what he said has been followed and the play let free.

WESCHLER: Was this censor a military censor? Who was it? Part of the civilian government?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, the whole government was a military government. Well, you couldn't say "a military government," but it was the same. The military depended on the government because it was still a kingdom.

WESCHLER: But what exactly was the method? When a book was about to be published, or a play about to be performed, it had to be mailed to an office somewhere--or what exactly was the method?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, when the theater director accepted this play, he had to send it to the censor. He couldn't perform a play without the censure before. This was always the use.

WESCHLER: And the censor was someone in Munich, a Bavarian?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, in Munich. Because Munich was the capital of Bavaria.

WESCHLER: We might just go ahead slightly here--a "flash-forward," I guess you could call it--to discuss the effect that this "Lied der Gefallen" had.



FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, later on, here in America, when my husband wanted to become a citizen, during a session with the immigration department--they came even here to have a hearing with him--they said, "In 1915 you wrote a poem called 'Song of the Fallen.' This is a premature anti-fascistic poem which is considered here as [the work of a fellow-traveler, and somebody like you cannot be a citizen."

WESCHLER: And he was then never to gain American citizenship?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, he never did gain American citizenship. Also because he was a friend of Bertolt Brecht who was, who admitted that he was a communist: that didn't help, of course. And when my husband died, the next day they called me and said, "We are terribly sorry, we just wanted to make him a citizen. And now you come...." The next month it was my birthday, and they said, "You come on your birthday and we will make you a citizen."

WESCHLER: Going back from nineteen-fifty-some-odd to 1914: After Lion in effect had his deferment for health reasons, the army apparently asked him to direct plays?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, for the soldiers when they came on leave. It was a very big theater called the Volks Theatre which was not so very literary, more folk plays, sometimes in dialect and so. This was always full of the



army. There was never a seat free, and there he had to direct those plays. The director asked him to choose his plays, and he chose a play of Gorky's, The Lower Depths; it was an enormous success, not so much with the soldiers but with the newspapers and also those who still had the possibility to see. It was absolutely new, and also, in a way, it was not with elegant people; it was a play with poor people, so it fitted in this whole ambience. Then [he staged] another play which was by Count [Eduard Graf von] Keyserling, who was a great poet, a playwright but a playwright-poet; it was called Ein Frühlingsopfer (that means Sacrifice of Spring). It was about the love of two young people in Eastern Germany, in the Balticum. And this was also the landscape of this part of Germany-- a very great artist had been asked to make the stage and the sets, to draw the drawings. It was so beautiful because in those parts there are beautiful birch forests there, young birches with white barks and light green leaves, and the whole stage was full of those birches, and when the curtain opened, people applauded before even a word had been spoken.

WESCHLER: What was the name of this artist?

FEUCHTWANGER: The artist was Baron Rolf von Haerschelmann. He was a dwarf and a great lover of books, a bibliophile, and had a beautiful library. He was really a dwarf, was



so small that everybody looked at him. And he had a brother that was a giant. And this was also a part of the Bohemian life of Schwabing, those two brothers going through the streets--like from the circus, you could almost say.

WESCHLER: You might talk a little bit about Haerschelmann's house, his household.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, where he lived. He had an apartment that was so full of books that he invented a new method to store books. He had books not only on the walls but also partitions which went into the room which were also full of books. You had always to go around the partitions. They were all antique books and very rare books, great books, and he found them very cheaply where they have been sold at fairs. There were fairs always for the church; when there were church holidays, there were always fairs on the outskirts of Munich. There you could find on the tables all these rare books, and he found the most beautiful things there. In the same house lived a man, Dr. Ludwig. He was descended from a famous classic playwright, [Otto] Ludwig. And because he was from a famous family, he thought he should marry somebody from another famous family; so he married the descendant of the philosopher [Friedrich] Schleiermacher, who was one of the great philosophers of Germany. Also in the same house was a little man [Ludwig Held] who was very sturdy; he had a





long beard like a Capuchin monk, and he was a Capuchin monk: he was a renegade of the Capuchin order and was very worldly. Mostly he was very much for women and very chivalrous. He kissed every woman, the hand. He seduced the wife of Dr. Ludwig, the descendant of Schleiermacher, who was a very pious philosopher. He finally married this very slim, big, tall woman; and he was the little, little monk. They married, and both were living in the same house, and the friendship with Dr. Ludwig continued like nothing had happened.\* That was Bohème.

WESCHLER: Before we turned on the tape, you said that as far as the war was concerned, nothing really changed in the Bohemian life.

FEUCHTWANGER: No, not at all. On the contrary, they were even nearer together because the whole Bohemians were against the war. We were all intellectuals. It was like a conspiracy: you knew without speaking that everybody was against the war. Also against the kaiser, many even for France, which was terrible--dangerous even.

WESCHLER: Let's talk a little bit more about the Bohemians during the war. Perhaps let's start with the painters.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, there was one painter who was not so young anymore and always starving, and all of a sudden he had a great success because he had adopted this new procedure of the expressionists, using thick strokes of paint,

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\*In her notes for this interview, Mrs. Feuchtwanger also notes that Held was later active in the Munich Revolution (cf 1918-1920) and became a councilman.



what is called the spachtel technique. He painted some portraits this way.

WESCHLER: What was his name?

FEUCHTWANGER: [Joseph] Futterer. He became very rich all of a sudden because his portraits were the big fashion. He rented a studio, also in Schwabing, very near to the Siegestor (which was the Arch of Triumph), and he was very proud of his new studio in an elegant house. There was even an elevator there, because he had to have his studio on the roof, for the light, the north light. For the first time in his life he had a telephone, and he was so pleased that in the evening he wanted to use it. But he had not many friends who had a telephone. So he took at random some numbers, and there was an answer, "Hello, City Morgue." He was superstitious and ran away, and for days he did not go into his studio anymore. Finally he got himself again to go back. He wanted to paint my husband, because my husband was a public figure as a critic, and so he painted him and sold his painting to the Museum of Mannheim, which was a kind of avant-garde museum. My husband saw this painting before it was finished, and then it was sold already. When the painting arrived, the director asked the painter what he should write underneath, and Futterer gave him the name and said he was a famous critic. But the name had been lost--nobody knew by who or how--so



they looked in the newspaper, and the first critic in Munich of the first paper was Richard Elchinger. So they wrote underneath, "Richard Elchinger, Critic of Munich." And when my husband was in Mannheim for the first night of one of his plays, he went to the museum to see his own portrait and there he saw "Richard Elchinger" under his head. But he was very glad it was not his name because his teeth were painted green and all kinds of--a very modern painting. So it probably still hangs there under the name of Richard Elchinger.

WESCHLER: That's something for archival research to follow up. Speaking of the painters in Munich, did you know any members of the Blue Rider movement?

FEUCHTWANGER: I only fleetingly met Franz Marc just before he went to war. Immediately he died in the war. It was a great loss.

WESCHLER: Was the movement essentially disbanded during the war?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, I don't know, because most of the painters weren't in Munich anymore. [Wassily] Kandinsky, I think, went to Switzerland; he was Russian. There were not many members in this movement left.

WESCHLER: You might talk about some other people of that scene. [pause in tape] We have one more Wedekind story.

FEUCHTWANGER: Once a very young actress had a great success.



She came very excited into the Torggelstube, and she jumped on the table and began to dance. Everybody gave her a glass of champagne, and all of a sudden she was very tired and laid down on the table; she was almost asleep. And Wedekind said, "Now, gentlemen, who begins?"

Another time, we were in a very elegant--it was after a premiere of Wedekind himself--wine restaurant where even telephones were on the tables. All of a sudden somebody called him and said, "I just send you the waiter with a bottle of champagne because we admire you so." Wedekind was very upset, and said, "I don't need to be paid a bottle of champagne by a foreigner, a man I don't even know!"

He was so upset, it was very difficult to subdue him.

WESCHLER: What was your living situation like in those years?

FEUCHTWANGER: In the beginning it wasn't so bad because my husband wrote those plays and he got the royalties. But later on it was always very difficult because the royalties didn't go directly to the author; they went to the publisher who also printed the books. And until it came to my husband, what was due to him--when in the morning it was still possible to buy something with it, by the afternoon you couldn't even buy a piece of bread anymore.

WESCHLER: But this is later, much later during the inflation.





FEUCHTWANGER: Ja. It was in the inflation. But also at the end of the war, there was nothing to eat. There was nothing to buy.

WESCHLER: Before we get there, though, in what section of Munich were you living?

FEUCHTWANGER: We were living in Schwabing in the part which was near to the Arch of Triumph and behind, in the rear, of the Akademie. There were two streets, the Georgenstrasse, which was our street, which was directly going from the Arch of Triumph (which was an imitation of the Paris one); and on the other side of the Akademie was the Akademie-strasse where Brecht lived. From our gardens, we looked out to the gardens of the Akademie, and on the other side, from the kitchen, we could look in the garden of the palace of Prince Leopold. So it was very nice to live there. Mostly it was wonderful because it was near to the State Library. My husband's second home was the State Library. Most of his work he wrote there, even when we had our own apartment; because it was allowed only to heat one single room and in this one room I usually had to write on the typewriter what he wrote at night in longhand. Because it was noisy, of course, when I used the typewriter, he went to the library and wrote almost all his works there in longhand.

WESCHLER: Was this going to be fairly standard procedure



all through his life, that you would type his works?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, later he had a secretary. Also he learned himself very well to typewrite, but he abandoned that because it made him nervous, the noise or so. So he rather wrote notes and dictated from his notes to the secretary.

WESCHLER: At this early stage, what were his handwritten manuscripts like? Were they heavily worked over?

FEUCHTWANGER: We have still two handwritten manuscripts from his novels; the one is Jud Süß (Power) and the other is The Ugly Duchess. They are all in big leaves--"octavos"--and all handwritten. He gave them to me, those two manuscripts. They are still here.

WESCHLER: How did they survive?

FEUCHTWANGER: Somebody kept them for us; we don't even know how they survived. One day we got them sent; I don't know how they came here. I think it was a friend of Lion's who was Gentile and who tried to save something from the house. He just could take those things. He couldn't take any bigger things, of course.

WESCHLER: Well, what did the manuscripts of the early plays look like? Was he someone who heavily worked over his...?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, he wrote everything many, many times. Those manuscripts which I spoke about, they are here at USC in the safe. They have offered \$6,000 each, but I didn't sell them. But he wrote everything many, many



times. He had a technique to dictate in different colors. For instance, the first draft was written by the secretary in orange, and then he looked it through overnight and made corrections. Then he dictated it again in blue; then that was the same procedure. Then he dictated it again in yellow; and the last thing, it was white always. But even then that was not the last. He was never really satisfied; he always polished his language.

WESCHLER: Was that already the case, this color-coding, that early?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, in those early days he just threw the things away and did another. It was only when he began to dictate. Also he could see from the color how far he had gone. For instance, sometimes he didn't want to polish it--when he was in the stream of thought, he didn't want to interrupt it--so he only dictated on and on. Then this was in blue, and of the yellow there was much less, so he had to go back again to the yellow and.... But he knew from the first look which one was more polished or less polished. Of the one that was less polished, there was usually more.

WESCHLER: Was even the first draft dictated?

FEUCHTWANGER: No. He made notes himself, and he knew shorthand very well; many of his notes are in shorthand. And then, mostly here but already in Europe, in the morning,



after we made our walk.... We went jogging and making calisthenics, and then we would go swimming in the ocean; we jogged up to the hill and went into the ocean. One day we jogged up, and one day we did calisthenics. Then we swam in the ocean, and then my husband took a shower and I prepared breakfast. After that, he read to me what he had written the day before, and we discussed it. Then came the secretary, and then he made the changes which came out sometimes from the discussion. Sometimes he was very angry with me. He always called me his most serious and strictest critic. He would say, "I never read to you again," and throw the manuscript in his drawer, but the next day he would say, "I think you were right." [laughter] [pause in tape]

WESCHLER: Getting back to the literary works of that first period, we might just tell a little bit about each of the first plays. We talked a good deal last time about The Persians, but we haven't mentioned at all his next play, Julia Farnese.

FEUCHTWANGER: That was a Renaissance play. When he wrote it.... For the first time we had better quarters--at first we had such a poor boarding house--on the English garden, with a beautiful view of the gardens. We invited the publisher and also Wedekind and some of his friends from the Torggelstube to read the play. I was lying--I





made a very clinching robe for myself, a dress with a housedress maker. You couldn't get any material anymore, but I had from my parents a lot of linen, and I had the linen dyed in yellow, and I made this dress from yellow linen. It was a long dress with a slit on one side. I was lying on a récamier (an antique couch named after Madame Récamier), and Lion read to the people. The publisher was immediately so taken of me that he said that I have to play Julia Farnese, who was a Renaissance princess. Finally it has been also played in Hamburg.

WESCHLER: Before you get to this, you might tell us how the story was first thought of. It was a play that had its origins before the war...?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, he was interested, of course, in Roman morals and life during the Borgias. For a long time, it was the great fashion to write about this time. There was a Swiss writer by the name of Conrad Ferdinand Meyer; he wrote this kind of novels or short stories, and I hated them. I didn't like them. But I didn't dare to tell it, you know; I considered myself not an expert, so I never told my opinion. But my husband was still very taken with this kind of work, and he read a kind of legend about a painter who wanted to paint the crucifixion.

WESCHLER: This is while you were still in Italy?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, it was in Italy; it was a little bit



also from the impressions of Italian art. When we were on our wandering in Calabria, I got blisters on my feet, and we had to stay for several days in a little village which was called Castelluccio. It was a godforsaken little place, but very beautiful, in the middle of those mountains. I remember how my husband was sitting in our very little room. He was sitting on our little balcony, an old iron balcony, and he was writing, and a shepherd went by into the sunset with his flock, playing his bagpipes. Always when I think of this play, this scenery comes to my mind. He made a draft there about this play.

WESCHLER: You might tell a little bit more now about the legend, what it was based on.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja. This legend was that a painter in those times wanted to paint the crucifixion. He wanted to paint it very naturally, so there was no other way to do that but to crucify his own friend, who then died on the cross. That was the plot of the play. He did it to impress the Princess Julia Farnese because he was very much in love with her. She came and saw the painting, and she was already thinking of something else--she had been in love with him but it was only fleetingly. First she was the lover of the Pope Alexander Borgia. Of course, he was an old man, and that's why she had this affair with this young painter. But then she heard that the pope was dying,



and she left the young painter and went to the dying pope. And this is the end of the play, as much as I remember. My husband hated the play, too, incidentally. He didn't want to speak about it anymore. But it was one of his first plays to play in Germany, in Hamburg but not in Munich.

WESCHLER: It was played during the war?

FEUCHTWANGER: During the war. It was very much sought after, because the part of Julia Farnese was a very beautiful part, the story of a beautiful and vicious princess and how it was of no avail that the painter did his best, even crucifying his own friend: she went away to the old pope who she really loved.

WESCHLER: And the publisher thought you would be a good princess.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes. [laughter] It was all very childish, how I behaved, but it was all so new for me.

WESCHLER: This was the first original work of his that was being played in serious theaters.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, this is true.

WESCHLER: How was it received?

FEUCHTWANGER: It was an enormous success with the audience, also in other cities--I don't remember which--but the critics were divided. Some were very good and some were very not so good. That's all I remember.

WESCHLER: And in retrospect, the official Feuchtwanger line



is "not so good."

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, that's true. [laughter] It was this period of "l'art pour l'art," that a painter who considers himself a great painter is allowed to do everything. Or as Oscar Wilde said, "A real poet, a real writer, can even write about cheese and it could be a great poem." It doesn't need any more great ideas; it needed only the art, great art.

WESCHLER: But gradually, Lion was moving away from that.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, when he saw what came out of this whole mentality, that the war came out, he was doubtful, and he changed entirely.

WESCHLER: How did he feel the war came out of that mentality? Do you mean the intellectuals had not been paying attention to...?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, that's true. The intellectuals were not interested in any politics; they only were interested in their own art or in the art of others, which they usually didn't like.

There was also another thing which my husband had to go through in Munich: it was a little later, during the Räteregierung, this Soviet in Munich, the revolution. All the artists in the Schwabing group, the good and the bad artists, the rich and the poor, they were all against the war and all very avant-garde and very much for the revolution. There was an older man who was a critic for a rather





conservative Berlin newspaper. He wrote critics about art and the theater. And he didn't like my husband very much. Most all the critics didn't like him because they found that he betrayed them. He was a critic himself, and all of a sudden he abandoned criticism and became a writer. That was a betrayal: he wanted to be better than them--that's what they thought. So he didn't like my husband very much. (I have also to mention that he was not young anymore, but all of a sudden he married a very young girl who was a shopgirl. She didn't look like anything, but he was artistic, and he made out of her a very good looking woman who looked like a Malaysian beauty. She was also very nice. All of a sudden, she got a baby. In the Bohemian circle of Schwabing, the baby was called "the umbrella baby." It was from a story that Haerschelmann brought out, you know, this painter: there was a story of a man who walked in the desert, and all of a sudden a lion came. The man was very fearful; he had only an umbrella with him. He opened the umbrella as a weapon, and the lion fell down dead--somebody else had shot the lion. That's why the child had been called "the umbrella baby.") [laughter] And this man....

WESCHLER: What was his name?

FEUCHTWANGER: Meyer. We called him "the soft Meyer": he had something soft. He was without bones, an older man,



and he was always called "the soft Meyer." He didn't like Lion because he said he wanted to be better than they were. And when the Räteregierung came, he said to everybody (and we heard it, of course), "Aren't you astonished how Feuchtwanger is reacting in this Räteregierung, that he is so indifferent to all these things? Isn't it amazing?" He said it with a smile, "I am very sorry about that." That's how much he thinks it is a pity he behaves like that. But in fact my husband just didn't tell that he was very upset: mostly he was upset because he saw that nothing essentially changed. There was no censure anymore, and there was the vote for women, but....

WESCHLER: Well, let's save a detailed discussion of the revolution for later.



TAPE NUMBER: VII, SIDE ONE

JULY 7, 1975 and JULY 10, 1975

WESCHLER: We are at this point proceeding with a catalog of the plays that were written during this period. We've talked about The Persians and we've also discussed the Renaissance play. The next major play that he wrote was Warren Hastings. You mentioned a little bit about the origins of that play before, but you could perhaps talk in a little bit more detail right now. In particular, you said that he was angered by anti-British songs that were popular in Germany at that time.

FEUCHTWANGER: He was not only angered; he couldn't understand that all of a sudden a big people which we had always admired, the great English empire, and also their literature--that all of a sudden they are only perfidious peoples. He just couldn't understand the change. And also that we had to change so much to hate them.

WESCHLER: What were some of the examples of that hatred?

FEUCHTWANGER: There was one great poem which was written by a man named Ernst Lissauer; he wrote the "Hate Song Against England" ["Hassgesang auf England"]. It was very popular and recited everywhere and quoted. My husband didn't want to write anything against Lissauer; he wanted to make another example. He thought it would be better



to know the enemy, because without hatred you could conduct much better to peace. Also he was interested all of a sudden--he read Macaulay and Carlyle, and he was interested in the history of the great men of England. He found the story of Warren Hastings, who was governor of India. He studied that, made research; and when he made research, he wanted to see what he did in India. It was told that Hastings had a very difficult time: he was considered a very good governor, but he was also accused of all kinds of misdeeds by his own English politics who came, like the people of the Congress, to see what was happening there. He had a very hard time later also in England, but he was acquitted in the end. It seems that Warren Hastings was also interested in the mentality of the Indians and meant very well, although it was a colonization. My husband also made research into Indian literature, and he found some plays which interested him, for instance, the play of Sakuntala--which was so much admired and praised by Goethe--by a man named Kalidasa. He found another play, which he even found better, by a legendary king named Sudraka. He began to read this play and wanted to make it into a play for Germany. He had to write it in verses--it was much too long, so he had to shorten it--and really to adapt it. It was an enormous success.

WESCHLER: What was it called?





FEUCHTWANGER: Vasantasena.

WESCHLER: Did Lion read Sanskrit?

FEUCHTWANGER: He read Sanskrit, yes, because he was studying antique philology, also antique German philology; and since German is one of the family of Indo-Germanic languages, so he had also to study Sanskrit. And that helped him a lot, of course.

WESCHLER: What essentially is Vasantasena about?

FEUCHTWANGER: Vasantasena is about a bayadere, a dancer. In India, those dancers were kind of holy women who danced in the temples. This is a kind of a mystery story because it has been told that Vasantasena has been murdered. A man who was from a high family but was impoverished, he loved her and she loved him. But another man, who was a prince and a very grotesque figure--a little bit like Caliban in The Tempest--he was jealous, and he kidnapped the dancer. He told everybody that this man--Tscharudutta was his name--had killed her. And this is the whole thing. It's called also, The Little Carriage of Clay. That's the subtitle. Finally when he is about to be hanged, she comes out and says, "I live! I am here!"

WESCHLER: Did this play have any direct political connotations or was it more of a return to l'art pour l'art?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, it was not, because it had many--what shall I say? For the poor, it had revolutionary ideas.



Some of those people who are friends and also subjects to the man who was from a great family, they utter very revolutionary things in verses. That was very much in my husband's sense. He was attracted by these things.

WESCHLER: We've mentioned that Warren Hastings and the Indian play got through the censor with the help of others.

[pause in tape] What was the name of the man who helped?

FEUCHTWANGER: It was a writer by the name of Michael Georg Conrad. He had a great renommé as a writer and was also socially greatly accepted, and he was very enthusiastic about the play. He knew everybody in Munich, and he went to the censor saying it would be a crime not to show, not to perform this play. And so it was freed.

WESCHLER: So it was performed. How was it received?

FEUCHTWANGER: It was a great success.

WESCHLER: Both critically and with the audience?

FEUCHTWANGER: It was critically, but also divided because there were always political things. For instance, conservative papers were not so much for it, but the more liberal ones were. The first, and greatest, newspaper wrote a very good critical review of it. Also the public was crazy about it. Some princes came into the theater; during the first night there, one of them came backstage to speak to my husband about what a beautiful play he wrote.

Also this prince, I have to tell you about. He was a



very funny personality; he was a musician and a doctor.

WESCHLER: What was his name?

FEUCHTWANGER: Prince Ludwig Ferdinand. He was one of the Wittelsbachs. He was a doctor, and everybody--the very rich bragged that they were treated by a prince. He made atrocious bills for them, but the poor people he treated for nothing. So he was a kind of Robin Hood, we called him always. He was also a musician, and he played in the opera orchestra conducted by the famous [Felix] Mottl. He played second violin. My husband's friend [Hartmann Trepka]--I spoke about this friend earlier, the one who was the first who saw me--was the first violinist. They were sitting together, and one day the prince said to him, "I have to go. I have to see a patient who is very sick. Don't tell Mottl anything about it." He disappeared, and very soon he came back and said, "He has already gone down the drain." And he fiddled again. [laughter]

WESCHLER: So, back to music.

FEUCHTWANGER: The musician has always put soap on his bow so he wouldn't be heard so much. And this same prince was a very great friend of the theater. He came to my husband's first night and congratulated him for the wonderful performance and wonderful play. And from then on, of course, the play was accepted socially, not only by



the people who were interested in literature. One lady, the most elegant lady of Munich, who was the wife of a big brewer and very rich, fell in love with the actor who played Warren Hastings. He was a very good actor, very good looking and had a beautiful voice. Very elegant and a little superficial. My husband was not quite so satisfied with him as the audience was enthusiastic.

WESCHLER: What was his name?

FEUCHTWANGER: [Franz] Scharwenka. He was the son of a Berlin musician. In Berlin, there is a big hall called Scharwenka Hall, a music hall. And this lady went every day. I counted until fifty. I always came by--the actors always wanted to see us, and we didn't live very far away--so at the end of the play every day I came backstage to see all the actors. I counted until fifty, and then I gave up. The first fifty times, she was every day in the first row. And that continued.

WESCHLER: So this play had a long run.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes. For Munich, a very long run.

WESCHLER: Were these plays beginning to be shown in other cities?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, it has been shown also in Berlin. But there it was a very unfortunate performance because my husband was not satisfied with the cast. Warren Hastings was played by a very popular actor [Walter Abel], but he





was not very manly. He was very elegant and light, but he had not this manhood which the Munich actor had. And the girl who played his wife [Johanna Zimmermann], she was taller than he was and very strong. So it wasn't the right mixture, and my husband was too--how should I say?--too shy to tell the director [Georg Altmann] that he thought it was not the right way, that the cast was not right. He didn't want to disappoint the girl and take her out. Nevertheless, the play had very much attention. One of the greatest Berlin critics had even written an article about it before the premiere, and it was expected that it would have a great success. But during the performance, there came the news from Vienna that the prime minister [Count Karl von Stürgkh] had been killed by a man named [Friedrich] Adler (he was Jewish). The news came and spread immediately, and all the critics who were to write about this also had to write about that--these were the first-class critics who also wrote about politics--so they all left the theater, and everything was finished. There did not even come a review out the next day because they all had to write articles about the murder. It still was played, but it wasn't the sensation that was expected because so many articles had been written before about it.

WESCHLER: But that's a very dramatic example of the



political intensity of life that was beginning--that it was no longer a time of l'art pour l'art. How had these two plays, Warren Hastings and the Vasantasena, stood up to the retrospective criticism of Lion himself? How did he later feel about them?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, he liked Vasantasena very much because it was really some of his revolutionary ideas in a very subtle way. Warren Hastings, he found a little bit too superficial. Later on, he wasn't interested in the theater, so he abandoned his plays in a way. They were too theatrical.

WESCHLER: How about continuing with this catalog of plays? Let's go to Der König und die Tänzerin.

FEUCHTWANGER: Der König und die Tänzerin was a splinter of Vasantasena. It was also an Indian play. It was very well performed because the actress [Elisabeth Kresse] was a very beautiful girl and she was almost nude. The painter who made the sets told her to bathe--she was absolutely almost black because she bathed in something with crystals which made the skin almost black. She had very little clothing on. She was very slim and very beautiful. It was a great success on account of this actress. It was not sexy, just beautiful. Ubermangansaureskali--that's a kind of little violet crystal. When you put them in the water, it becomes violet, but your skin becomes almost brown--like iodine.



WESCHLER: But that play was not a major play.

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, it had no great following. Vasantasena was played everywhere in every great theater; also Hastings played in many other theaters. But in those times we did not have much money or much to eat, and we didn't hear much about what happened. Sometimes we heard from the publisher that it was played in such and such a city, and we also got sometimes the programs which were on the walls of the houses.

WESCHLER: How about moving, if that play is not that important, to one which I think is more important, Die Kriegsgefangenen.

FEUCHTWANGER: Die Kriegsgefangenen could not be played. It was never allowed by the censor. But it was the first play after the war which was translated into French, right after the war, and has been in a Paris newspaper in installments.

WESCHLER: What is it about?

FEUCHTWANGER: It was against the war, of course, and also about the prisoners of war, how they had been treated so badly, about one who had an affair with a girl and has been shot.

WESCHLER: What is the plot?

FEUCHTWANGER: It's not much; it's very difficult about the plot because it's more atmosphere than plot. It's



just about two prisoners of war: one a Frenchman, very light and not very deep but charming; the other was a Russian, heavy and deep thinking and melancholy. Those two were together because they had to work together, against the right of the people (it's not allowed to have prisoners of war working). In the evening they went together-- each one spoke about his pays, his country. I say "pays" because it's French. But the important thing is that when they speak, they don't speak together; everyone speaks for himself.

WESCHLER: Soliloquies.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja. But they are sitting together. And then comes a young girl who is the daughter of a rich estate owner, and the Frenchman falls in love with her. There develops a tragedy, and the fiancé of the girl then kills the Frenchman, shoots him to death.

WESCHLER: For obvious reasons, this play was not performed. A question about that in principle: when a play was censored, was there more political harassment of the author than just the fact of the censorship?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, nobody knew about that. If it was censored, nobody knew.

WESCHLER: But the government knew that he was writing plays like this.

FEUCHTWANGER: No, I don't think so. It was war, and a





writer wasn't taken very seriously in those days. When it was censored and was not allowed, then it was all right: he could try it again, and it could be censored again.

WESCHLER: So we are relatively early in a century which was going to see a lot more repressive things.

FEUCHTWANGER: Also, Wedekind was censored all the time, even before, in peacetime. He was always forbidden and always censored. It was very funny: one play which has been censored and couldn't be performed, he gave a reading to invited people in a hotel down in the basement. There was a kind of bar there, a very big room, and he invited all his friends; all kinds of people were there, but only by invitation. During the reading of this play, which was considered very revolting and sexy, there was an earthquake, which was not often. So the people, of course, said that--God has spoken. They were all very Catholic.

WESCHLER: God was censoring that play.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja. [laughter]

WESCHLER: Well, moving along the list here, we come upon a 1917 entry for an Aristophanic play.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja. It was also a peace play; it was called Peace [Friede]. It was actually two plays: one was the Eirene, the other I don't remember now [The Acharnians]. They were two plays by Aristophanes. The most important thing of it was that the funny verses of Aristophanes had



been translated by my husband and made into funny verses in German, which is not very easy. Some of the verses have often been cited or quoted in newspapers. It was not a play which could be called good for the audience. It had the chanting choruses; it would have been a good musical because of the choruses. But it was a literary success when it was printed and it received good critics. Reinhardt wanted to play it once, but then Hitler came. But now they played it in Germany after the Second World War several times.

WESCHLER: Was it not allowed to be played during the war?

FEUCHTWANGER: No! The title already was bad.

WESCHLER: Another play which was not played was the John Webster translation.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, Appius und Virginia. My husband even did not want it to play; he just wanted to translate it. He was interested in the plot, which was a little bit like another play, by [Gotthold] Lessing. It was more or less an exercise in translating from English into German.

WESCHLER: Did he at that time see that his vocation would be primarily translating and adapting?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, he was only--he was a theater fanatic in those days, an aficionado. He also went to the rehearsals. I was very good friends with all the actors. In those days it was difficult to get material, and I had



myself made many things with a seamstress who came to the house--I had my mother's sewing machine so we could make all kinds of things--so I always lent my clothes to the actresses.

WESCHLER: So you were both theater fanatics.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, we both were.

WESCHLER: But you don't think he would have seen his primary vocation as that of a translator?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, not at all. It was just that in other countries there were good theater plays, so he wanted to translate them, to see them performed. He was only for the theater. Like Brecht also, who only seldom wrote his own plot. He always had--for instance, Threepenny Opera was also in a way a translation, an adaptation.

WESCHLER: The next play that comes up is a play that in a way is a transition from the dramatic to the novel, and that's Jud Süß, which was originally a play and was being written at this time.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja. But he didn't think of the novel when he wrote it.

WESCHLER: What was the situation? Why was he interested in writing that?

FEUCHTWANGER: When he was very young, he heard a lot about Süß, who was a historical personality. And it was an historical plot. He found this very interesting, also



because he studied the whole time. It has been found out by many serious scholars that Jud Süß was innocent-- he has been hanged--but he was not innocent morally.

WESCHLER: Well, first tell us who he was.

FEUCHTWANGER: [Joseph Süß Oppenheimer] was a courtier-- it was a little bit like [Henry] Kissinger--of the Archduke of Württemberg. He was his minister, and he helped him to rob the people in a way--that's why he was morally not innocent. But he was innocent of crime. He was very ambitious as a Jew to be in the highest position and have such a great influence. He also was very elegant and very rich. That was what interested my husband, but mostly what interested Lion was that he entirely changed before he was hung. That was also the changing of my husband which came through. Süß was a widower, and his only child had died because of the archduke. He wanted to seduce the child, but she ran away on the roof and fell down. And this changed Süß's whole life: the child was the only excuse for his life, in a way. He had an uncle who had misgivings about the whole thing and brought up the child. The uncle was not always satisfied with him, and of course Süß's conscience was therefore not very quiet. When he saw what happened to his life, that he had lost the only thing which was worthwhile, Süß changed entirely, and his only ambition was to revenge his child.





And the moment he had his revenge (because he made a political turn to the disadvantage of the archduke: he did it intentionally, so when the archduke heard his Jew has betrayed him, he fell down dead, he had a stroke) in the moment when Jud Süß knew that he had wreaked revenge, he let himself go: that was all what he wanted, and he didn't want to live anymore. He became a recluse and was imprisoned. He was visited then by his uncle. He was already out of the world before he was hanged.

WESCHLER: Was that the center of action in the play as well as the novel?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, only when he had finished the play and had seen it on the stage--the same actor [Franz Scharwenka] who played Warren Hastings also played Jud Süß, very effectually; it was a great success--he was horrified about the whole thing because he felt that he only made the outside, the superficial of the character, story, and the situation. Afterward he didn't want to have anything to do anymore with the play, and he decided to write a novel where he could write about his ideas.

WESCHLER: Was this performed during the war?

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja. That was also performed during the war.

WESCHLER: Was there a political ground for this too?



It doesn't seem immediately to be a political allegory of anything in the present.

FEUCHTWANGER: No, there weren't any political disturbances.

WESCHLER: I notice that it's really the first of this series of plays of his maturity to deal with Jewish themes.

FEUCHTWANGER: The only disturbance was in the family.

My mother-in-law came once to ask me why Lion is always writing about Jewish things.

WESCHLER: Always? It seems to me that this is the first one of this series.

FEUCHTWANGER: No, he wrote short stories about Jewish things. But that was later.

WESCHLER: But this is the first of this series of things where he employs Jewish themes, in this play.

FEUCHTWANGER: Not only Jewish themes, but also he abandoned his attitude about art and against life. From then on he changed entirely his attitudes, also [coming out] against war--not against the war, but for peace and for the articles of peace.

WESCHLER: How so?

FEUCHTWANGER: It was that he was against power. It was called Power here because it was against power. His attitude was against power and for the inner life.

WESCHLER: So this marks the beginning of some serious political changes.



FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja. Most of all when he saw the play-- not so much when he wrote it--he thought that nothing what he wanted to explain and to be a witness [came] out in the play. It came out only that there was a very good looking actor who the ladies liked very much.

WESCHLER: Well, I think we'll stop for today. The next session, we'll begin to go in several directions. We'll discuss the transition from the play to the novel, but we also have a very important play still to talk about-- Thomas Wendt.

FEUCHTWANGER: Thomas Wendt is most important. That is the turning point.

WESCHLER: And we will also move from the war to the revolution.

JULY 10, 1975

WESCHLER: We ended the last interview by doing a catalog of your husband's plays during the war. Now we're coming toward the end of the war, and today we're going to talk primarily about the end of the war, the Soviet revolution, and then the revolution in Munich, all of this as a prelude to talking about your husband's play Thomas Wendt, which we'll talk about at the end of the session today. We might start with the Soviet revolution. That took place in the fall of 1917. How was it seen in Germany?



FEUCHTWANGER: First, since the war was still going on, it was considered as a victory for Germany. There was a General [Max von] Hoffman who dictated the peace to Lenin in a very humiliating way--he hammered on the table and so forth. That was known. Also it was, of course, thought it would be easier now that they had no front against the Russians, against the East. The only front was against France. In a way it was not so much militarily that Germany lost the war, but rather that they didn't have anything left to eat anymore and everything was disrupted. It was a relief for the military that Russia made their revolution. So it was not at all anything that would have frightened the people. They welcomed it.

WESCHLER: How did the people in the Bohemian community in Munich feel about it?

FEUCHTWANGER: They were very happy about the falling of czarism. Everybody--not only the Bohemians--I think the whole people in Germany were very much against czarism and against the cruelties which they had heard: against starvation, which was known, in Siberia; against those prisons in Siberia where people, mostly the intellectuals, had been sent. Also Gorky was there. Everybody knew that in Germany. So Russia was very unpopular, and mostly the government. Remember also, once a prime minister was shot, and nobody was unhappy about it. After the war with Japan, when there were bad times in Russia, they always had pogroms.





So of course the Jews were very happy that no one was there anymore to start pogroms. Although the other people were indifferent to the Jews, they were not against the Jews; and those cruelties, of course, were spread all through in the news. I remember when there was Kichinev, there was a song, a Jewish song, which always repeated "Kichinev," which was a Russian town where these terrible pogroms took place. When people came from there, all starving and in tatters, then we knew they came from those pogroms, and they were usually sent to Holland and later America. Mostly the Russian Jews who are mostly in America all came before the Revolution; they came from the pogroms. And so everybody considered it a blessing that this regime had fallen.

WESCHLER: It's interesting that even those who supported the kaiser were against the czar.

FEUCHTWANGER: Absolutely, ja, ja. Even the kaiser himself. The czar was his cousin, but he hated him. There were three cousins: Edward, the king of England; the kaiser; and Nicky (as he called him), Nicholas from Russia. They were all cousins, and they hated each other. It was amazing that those three monarchs had made war between themselves. But I don't think that Wilhelm hated Nicholas because of the Jews or anything like that: it was just that he found Russia too big and he felt there is a kind



of danger. Only Bismarck had not spoken about this danger. Also they were afraid that someday it couldn't end very well because there were too many poor and unsatisfied people there. Even [Erich] Ludendorff tried. When he invaded Poland--Poland was for a long time German prior to our time--he wrote a letter, "An meine lieben Juden" ("To my beloved Jews"). He wrote a Yiddish letter--which he wrote not himself--and the Jews were on the side of the Germans in Russia because they were against the czar. That's why Ludendorff, who was the highest marshal of Germany, made friends with the Jews--to have them help against the Russians.

WESCHLER: Well, the czar had been disposed of already in March 1917, and the Communist revolution was in November.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, [the first one] was not the real Communist revolution. You can't say it was no revolution because [Aleksandr] Kerenski, who came to power immediately, was not a Communist.

WESCHLER: Right, well, that was in March. What I'm wondering now, given that the czar wasn't there, how did the citizens of Munich--and particularly the Schwabing district--feel about the turn that the revolution took with Lenin's ascendancy?

FEUCHTWANGER: Lenin wasn't known to many in Schwabing



because he always lived in exile either in Paris or in Switzerland. Oh, there is a funny story I have to tell you. In Vienna, the prime minister went to the very old emperor of Austria. It was long before the revolution-- [Franz Joseph] was no longer alive when the revolution came; he was replaced by his nephew Karl. The prime minister said, "Do you know, your majesty, there could be a revolution in Russia when the war goes bad for Russia?" Then the emperor said, "But who could make a revolution in Russia, maybe Mr. Trotsky of the Café Central?" And this is a true story. So we didn't take them very seriously. They were like Gorky and all those; they were intellectuals who had ideas and ideals but were not considered dangerous. WESCHLER: But then they did turn out to be much more dangerous.

FEUCHTWANGER: They turned out...they were so well organized. It was all organized in their mind. It turned out there were not much killings in Russia, except when the White Army came.

WESCHLER: Okay, that's later. Let's keep that off for a second. But once the revolution actually took place, did the Bohemian community--and now I'm talking about the people we've been talking about in Munich--did they look at the revolution as a model for something that could happen in Germany?



FEUCHTWANGER: No, not at all. Not at all.

WESCHLER: What was their attitude in that context?

FEUCHTWANGER: They were all so unpolitical and apolitical. They didn't think this could happen here. They may have thought maybe that it would be good to have it here, because the intellectuals were all pacifists, of course, except Thomas Mann and maybe Bruno Frank, who in the beginning was also a patriot and wrote patriotic poems. But we all were pacifists and all would have welcomed an end to monarchies. They wouldn't have wanted real communism, but a republic, I would say, like America. Something like that.

WESCHLER: So they were more or less benignly happy about....

FEUCHTWANGER: Also, France was a republic, you know. They said France had a revolution long ago, but we never had a revolution here. They tried in 1848, and this came to no avail. [pause in tape]

WESCHLER: While we were off tape you said that they thought Kerenski was too weak.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, they thought he was too mild, let's say. They all learned about the French Revolution, that a revolution cannot--and also it didn't work out in 1848--go so peacefully. But of course they wouldn't have liked it to happen in Germany. They just thought that Russia was ripe for the revolution, with the serfdom and the





terrible hunger and starvation every year.

WESCHLER: So the Marxism of that community was not a very....

FEUCHTWANGER: No, they were not really Marxists; they were not really Communists. There was not even the name "communism"; that came after the war only. It was Marxism and socialism. Socialism was what embraced everything. They were, of course, socialists, but that was a very vague thing and they never thought about practicing it. It was just an idea. It was something which Mr. [Kurt] Eisner wrote about in his newspaper, you know. But not what should really come to pass. [pause in tape]

WESCHLER: We were just now talking about the status of their Marxism.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, those who were socialists--"Marxism" and "communism," these expressions were not used at those times; they were called "socialists"--they were all in a way socialists. But other people who were against them called them "Salon Communists," or "Salon Socialists." That means that they would never practice it; it was just ideas. Later on, there is now also a difference between Communists and Marxists. I regard that Communists are the activists, and Marxists the theorists.

WESCHLER: The way you phrased it while we were off tape was that "Marxists are those who don't really want it to



happen, whereas the Communists do want it to happen."

FEUCHTWANGER: I don't really remember what I said.

WESCHLER: Well, that's what you said. [laughter] I will also admit that you were reluctant to say it on tape.

FEUCHTWANGER: I didn't say that, because that's really not me. I said that only in relation to [Theodor] Adorno. You couldn't say so silly things about the Marxists. Mr. Herbert Marcuse would have your head, because he is a Marxist. [pause in tape]

WESCHLER: Well, during the last months of the war--and now I'm talking about the period between the Soviet revolution and the final collapse in 1918--was there any increasing politicalization of life? This is before the [Munich] revolution actually takes place. Was there any kind of active peace movement? Was there any kind of active dissent movement?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, you know that was too dangerous. People in a peace movement or a dissent movement would have gone to jail immediately. There was still the emperor, you know; we had still censure and very strict discipline. The people were so starved and so tired that they wouldn't have even had the strength to do anything of this kind. It was only when the soldiers began to rise or turn around, to mutiny--and mostly the mutiny in Hamburg of the sailors in the navy. Of course, you could hear about it. It



was suppressed as much as possible in the newspapers, but still it sneaked through.

Then, the first time I saw a demonstration was when my husband had an operation on the hernia which he got when he was in the army. I came back--from seeing him--on the streetcar, and I saw a procession or demonstration.

WESCHLER: This was very near the end of the war.

FEUCHTWANGER: But nobody knew about that, you know, and neither did I. We were only very starved and very tired and very desolate. I thought that those must be people who--in those days there were no signs. I didn't see any sign carriers; I just saw the people very quiet. It was a little eerie--no noise, they went quiet, no shouts, no menace or violence. They just went very quietly and slowly through the streets. What amazed me most and attracted my attention was that there were soldiers in the masses. This was so dangerous because they were in danger to be shot as deserters when they would be in a demonstration like that--that they dared that! So I thought there must be something happening. Then I saw a man in the middle of this--almost alone--in the middle of this demonstration. He had a frock coat on, which is usually a very elegant cloth; but it was very shabby, almost green instead of black. He had also a backpack which was empty on his back. It was very grotesque. He had red hair and a small



red beard. He was very pale. And I knew that this was Kurt Eisner. I had never met him before, but I had seen him somewhere--someone had showed him to me at the café in the Hofgarden. I knew that he was a socialist, but I never thought that he would be a revolutionary. It was theoretical in a way. He was a very learned man, a knowledgeable man, and he wrote theater critics.

WESCHLER: Before we talk about him, what happened with that procession?

FEUCHTWANGER: I don't know what happened. I followed it for a while, and then I went home. But it was very eerie, mostly because it was so quiet. What astonished me most were the soldiers, that they would risk their lives to go in a demonstration.





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JULY 10, 1975

WESCHLER: We've just been talking about the peace demonstrations that were taking place in the weeks before the armistice, and you might continue with the story of what happened after that in Munich.

FEUCHTWANGER: After that, a very few days afterward--much as I recall, it was the twelfth of November--the newspapers brought the headlines, "Armistice, The War Is Over." And then there was much gaiety. People were very happy, although we still had nothing to eat. But of course the nightmare was over. And then very soon came the soldiers back from the front. They just turned around and left in the middle of the battle. I talked to some colonels or so I knew, and they said, "They just turned around and left. We stood there, and then we followed them." When they arrived at the station and met all their superiors, nothing happened. The superiors were very much afraid that they would be slain by the furious soldiers and that there would be violence. The worst that was, and it was very much also in the newspaper stressed, was that they tore the epaulets away from some of their superiors. That was the only thing that happened. And they were so very upset about that instead of being glad that nothing worse



was.

Then the critic [Richard Elchinger] of the Münchener Neusten Nachrichten, that is the great newspaper in Munich, called us and said, "Let's go on the street and look at the revolution." It was like a circus. So we went with him, and we saw the big trucks full of soldiers. It reminded me of the beginning when the soldiers were with garlands, going singing into the war, but there were no garlands this time. They had rifles, but they shot the rifles only in the air because they were so happy about the whole thing. They were drinking beer; all of them had a bottle of beer and were drinking. Everybody was happy, and the people were winking and waving and were very glad about everything that happened, that everything is over.

And then we went on and came to the Residenz--that is the royal castle--and at the [gate] where usually the people were at attention and a soldier went up and down with his rifle, there was no outside guard; inside they were sitting and playing cards. We went through the Residenz, which had big courts where you could go through to the other side. In the meantime, it became night. We saw a coach there and a carriage; then came an old man with a lady and several younger women who obviously were his daughters, and they went into the carriage and left. And this was our king.



WESCHLER: This was an escape of the king?

FEUCHTWANGER: It was his escape; he went to Austria.

Ja, ja.

WESCHLER: What would have happened to him had he not escaped? Was he hated by the people?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, he was very much liked. They didn't like him that he assisted the kaiser in the war; they would have much better liked if he had made war to the kaiser. [laughter] But he was popular because he was unelegant, you know. He had these famous king-trousers; everybody when they had bad-fitting trousers which were not creased, they called it "the king's trousers." And he was simple, and he was rather rich because he had a gin factory. His wife inherited great estates, and they had lots of potatoes and made gin out of the potatoes. [laughter]

WESCHLER: So that made him popular.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, he was very popular in this way, ja, ja. So there never would have happened something. But of course I'm sure he didn't like the whole thing.

WESCHLER: What about the feelings about the kaiser? Do you think he would have been in danger?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, they were very cynical about him; they said, "Now, he made the war, and now, instead of being here and trying to save something, he runs away to Amerongen, to Holland." But there was another one who



was very popular; that was Prince Max von Württemberg. He was a nephew of the great duke of Württemberg who was deposed; but he was before already a socialist, so he took over. Only, he was not a very efficient prime minister, and later on he had to leave, too. But he saved a lot of trouble because he was prepared in a way, spiritually prepared.

WESCHLER: The sense I'm getting from all of this is that the violently political revolution that we imagine happening at the end of the war wasn't really that violent at all.

FEUCHTWANGER: No, not at all. It was just that the kaiser ran away, and we were glad to have peace. That was all. Everybody was glad. And then Eisner has been elected-- there was a parliament then and he was elected as a prime minister....

WESCHLER: Of Bavaria?

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja. And there was a Peasant and Soldier Council, it was called. They went together and made the revolution and the government. I remember we lived in a house; we had the apartment of a general who was in the war, and he wanted that somebody lives in his apartment. This was in the house of his father-in-law and mother-in-law, and she, the lady, came to us and said, "Oh, we are so glad that now everything went so well, no violence and this emperor.... They all lied to us, they were all lies.





They always said we will be victorious, and now we see what happened. But this man Eisner seems a very decent man, and we are very glad to have him. Nothing serious happened, and everything goes on all right."

WESCHLER: Let's talk a little bit about Eisner. What kind of relations did Eisner have with your husband, if any?

FEUCHTWANGER: Eisner had a newspaper which was called the Munich Post and was a socialist paper.

WESCHLER: He was a journalist to begin with.

FEUCHTWANGER: He was a journalist, but he was very knowledgeable--I shouldn't say "but" [laughter]: and he was very knowledgeable--and intellectual also, a writer, but he didn't like my husband.

WESCHLER: Why is that?

FEUCHTWANGER: When my husband had this affair with the Phoebus Club, he wrote about the scandal in his newspaper and called him "the little margarine baron." He thought Lion was a very rich man and that he should have paid those workmen; instead it was in the contract that the contractor paid the workmen. But he didn't know very much about it; he was just glad to have an occasion to attack somebody who was rich. He didn't know that my husband was always hungry and was not at home with his rich parents but lived rather in a single room.



WESCHLER: Speaking of your husband's poverty of that period, we were talking before the session of a couple of other examples of his poverty which you might mention now.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja. We had a sign--when he was at home, that he had always his drapes closed on his window; and when he went away, he had the drapes open--so I would not have to go up and speak with his landlady, who was not too friendly with me. But one time when I had time and could see him, the drapes were always open and so I couldn't go up. Finally I was afraid something had happened, so I went to the landlady and asked if she knows where Lion is. She said no, she hasn't seen him for a while. Just then I saw him coming, and he said now he can go back in his room. He had had no money to pay his rent and was afraid she would turn him out, so he ran around the whole night and didn't know where to go. In the morning he went looking for his youngest brother and [borrowed] some money from him, who said, of course, he had to pay it back in double. So he could at least pay the rent and could go back again into his room. But I saw an article lying on the table; it was a critic about the [most recent] first night in the theater. I said, "Why didn't you send it to Berlin to the Schaubuhne?" He said, "Oh, I forgot about it." And then I noticed that there was no stamp on it, and he had obviously no money for the stamps, so I took the letter with me



and sent it to Berlin.

WESCHLER: So this was the life of "the little margarine baron." Did Eisner ever become more friendly?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes. Later on then we had a friend [Adolf Kaufmann] who was a lawyer and also the owner of the avant-garde [Kammerspiele] theater. He was always a socialist, although he was a very rich man, and he was a friend of Eisner. He once asked Eisner, "What do you have against Feuchtwanger?" And Eisner said, "Oh, that's an old story: he is too rich," or something like that. And then this man, this lawyer, told him that in those days, at least, my husband was not rich at all, and also told him how the story was, that he had nothing to do with this scandal. We didn't know that this had happened later, but when my husband had his premiere of The Persians--it was really a great success and it was very beautifully performed--Eisner wrote a glowing article about it.

WESCHLER: Eisner was also the theater critic.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, he was the theater critic. He was everything in his newspaper; he wrote the whole thing from beginning to end. He had an assistant who was a student then, an admirer of Eisner and also socialist in a way. He was also a son of a very rich man. His mother was a Feuchtwanger. This young assistant is now a professor in Berkeley. He's retired, of course, but his



name is Professor [Karl] Landauer. This was a relative of mine. But I never met him since he was a child. [laughter]

WESCHLER: How was Eisner regarded? How was his paper regarded?

FEUCHTWANGER: His paper was regarded as the best theater newspaper; the best critics were printed there. Those who were in the know, the literati and the intellectuals, read his--not his paper, nothing about politics, but his theater critics. He could make good or bad weather in the theater, in a way. He was influential.

WESCHLER: But he himself was not, during the war anyway, considered a major political force.

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, not at all.

WESCHLER: And at the time you saw him he was in his green frock coat.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, he was very poor and nobody took him seriously, also not his newspaper, except those who were already socialists.

WESCHLER: Well, how did it come about that he became the head of the government of Munich?

FEUCHTWANGER: Because there was nobody else there. [laughter] Nobody else could make the revolution.

WESCHLER: And what actually took place? Did he proclaim it, or...?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, he proclaimed it. It was a great affair,





and my husband and I were invited at--it was still the Royal Theater, and then it became the State Theater. He spoke there. There was a performance of a classic play, which was Des Epimenides Erwachen. It was by Goethe. It was a very classic play in verses and with great gestures and so. And all of a sudden, then, the curtain fell and opened again a little bit, and a little man came out. He said, "We are socialists and we are democrats." He lisped a little bit--that was Eisner. That was his first performance, before a full house, you know, an enormous theater.

WESCHLER: What was the reaction?

FEUCHTWANGER: "We are socialists and we are democrats." The reaction was great, great applause, because everybody was glad that somebody took over and that the war was over. There was nobody there: all the [government] people, they went all in the ratholes, those who had been there before. [laughter]

WESCHLER: So this was the revolution in Munich.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, and we had the apartment of a general who was in the war and wanted to have somebody living in his apartment. It was a very beautiful apartment in Schwabing also; the house belonged to his father-in-law. One day his mother-in-law came to us and said, "I wanted to speak with you. I know that you know this kind of



people like Eisner, and I wanted to speak with you, Mr. Feuchtwanger, about the things we have to expect. We think we are very glad to have Mr. Eisner now. All the others, they have lied to us. They spoke always about victory, about those French who are not good soldiers, and everything was lies, lies, lies. Now we are glad to have this man who seems a very quiet man and not violent." That's what she said.

But after he has been assassinated, which wasn't very long afterwards.... It was when he was on his way to resign because he couldn't hold the radicals anymore. He was only an independent socialist, which was between socialist and communist, and the radicals made too much noise. He didn't want to go with them--he was always in the middle--so he resigned. He was on his way to resign, to the parliament, when he was assassinated by a Count [Anton von] Arco[-Valley]. When the funeral was, the funeral procession went through the whole city, and all the people who applauded him when he came and when he was first seen, they were all so glad that he was murdered. And this was already a bad sign, you know. It was an omen, a bad omen.

WESCHLER: I want to talk a little bit about his administration in Munich. To begin with, I wanted to ask you about certain particular literary figures and whether you know



how they felt about Eisner.

FEUCHTWANGER: They were very much for him.

WESCHLER: How did Erich Mühsam feel?

FEUCHTWANGER: Mühsam was a friend of his, but he was against him, because Mühsam was an anarchist and, of course, he thought Eisner was much too mild and that it was nothing what he does and it will never come to anything. But he was--you know, anarchism says that everything has to go worse and worse and only then can it go better. But they were still very good friends.

WESCHLER: How did Heinrich Mann feel?

FEUCHTWANGER: Heinrich Mann was very much for Eisner, for the whole revolution.

WESCHLER: Thomas Mann?

FEUCHTWANGER: I don't think so. We didn't speak with him then; but he was not for it, of course.

WESCHLER: Are there any other particular people whose reactions are relevant?

FEUCHTWANGER: Wedekind was already dead. He died in 1918. But he would have welcomed the whole thing.

WESCHLER: Okay, well, let's proceed to what actually took place. Eisner's administration was only a couple of months long.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, and also, you know, the trouble was that everything that was good of socialism in those days--and



was good--was its undoing. Eisner introduced the vote for women--that was the first time in Germany--and also he abolished censorship. And both those things were his undoing because immediately then--not long, at first it was like a honeymoon, but then they attacked him viciously. The vote for women was the greatest mistake because all the women were Catholic and were directed by the Catholic Church against everything. The Catholic Church was always for monarchism, and against anything revolutionary. And the peasant women--even they voted, of course. It was a very funny thing, we were invited to an estate on the Chiemsee with friends, and there were those placards about the next election. There was "KPD" on some of the signs, and an old woman asked the gentleman [Deffner] at whose estate we were invited--during the war he was himself in Russia as a soldier; he was the son of a very rich manufacturer, but he was to the left. (All those who were in the war were very much to the left.) He was very upset about the whole thing. An old woman asked him, "What does it mean, KPD? What party is this?" And he said, "It's the Catholic party." And everybody in this village, they voted for communism, because, of course, it was actually the Communist party. He said it was the Catholic party, and everybody read KPD.... [laughter]

WESCHLER: How did the Communist party get along with Eisner?





FEUCHTWANGER: Not at all. They found him not severe enough, strict enough. But still they were in the government together. That's why he wanted to resign, because he thought it wouldn't come to any good when he stays longer.

WESCHLER: What concrete program did Eisner want to pursue?

FEUCHTWANGER: All he wanted was that people had enough to eat, mostly. But you cannot stamp that out of the ground all of a sudden, you know; it would have taken time. And also the peasants took advantage of the plight of the cities and asked enormous prices, usually. This also was very bad.

WESCHLER: This is still the winter of that year.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja. And no coals, nothing to heat. Every family was allowed only one room to heat. And only one room for light.

WESCHLER: What was that winter like? Was it a hard winter?

FEUCHTWANGER: It was a hard winter, a very hard winter, ja.

There was also--it was a little later, already after he has been assassinated--some friends of ours had a little bread and butter, you know. That was a party with bread and butter. Usually everybody brought himself something to eat because nobody had money; and also everybody who could afford it brought a bottle of wine. And there we were at this party. She [Mira Deutsch] was a friend of



the publisher of my husband. The publisher died also in the war. She had a child from him. She wasn't married with him, but she had a child. And she lived together with a baron who was also a writer [Renato von Hollander], a very elegant and good looking young man. She looked like a Creole, you know, like a South American beauty. She was known as very free living, and it was always very amusing. I, for instance, only looked at it, but all those people were more active. There were not enough chairs, so they had mattresses on the floor and they were lying there. For our experiences now, it was harmless; nothing worse than kissing happened, or a little petting. And there were famous people there: for instance, the Generalintendant, the director of the State Theatre, Albert Steinrück, a famous actor from before, Reinhardt's actor. And some people who were really with great names: Bruno Frank, who was a great poet then; and we were there; and [Karl] Wolfskehl, who was also known as a poet. And all of a sudden there was a noise on the door, and we looked out, and there were lots of soldiers outside. They said, "You have to all come with us. You make here those orgies, and we don't allow that in our revolution." It looked a little bit dangerous with the rifles and so. But I had the idea. "How about calling Mühsam?" He was something like the police chief then; he worked in the police. So



we called Mühsam, and he was really at the police station, and he said, "Let some soldier come to the telephone." So I called one, and they spoke together, and Mühsam said, "Let those people go; they are my friends!" So they left again. Everything was over. But afterwards, when the Räteregierung was over, when the whole thing was over and it was counterrevolution, then it had an afterplay which was not so simple anymore. But I have to tell you another thing when....

WESCHLER: Why don't you finish? What was the aftereffect?

FEUCHTWANGER: That comes a little later. Because first I wanted to tell you something which happened then. Mühsam sent a soldier to the apartment of Rainer Maria Rilke, and there they had to put a sign on the door which said, "At the apartment of Rainer Maria Rilke, there is no pilfering!" [laughter] And nobody touched anything.

WESCHLER: So these were very aesthetic revolutionaries.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja. Ja, ja. [laughter] Rainer Maria Rilke, who was such an aristocratic poet, he loved the whole thing, you know; he was very much with it.

Then the afterplay of this evening was after the counterrevolution, when the Räteregierung was put down. It was a terrible bloodshed during this time; it was not like the revolution we did. This was a revolution which came from the north then, a counterrevolution. The blood



came out underneath the doors of the--what do you call it where they kill the animals?--the slaughterhouse. Ja, they slaughtered people there who were in the army or so, or who were suspicious as socialists. Many were absolutely innocent. For instance, the soldiers of the counterrevolution came into the basement of a palace, and there were about eleven young men. They thought they were communists because they were hidden there, so they killed them one after the other and danced in a kind of--they were drunken of blood, you know, and danced on their bodies. Our friend, the lawyer, found out what had happened, and he was then called when there was a trial for the murder of those young people. They were not communists; they were anticommunists and were afraid of communists; that's why they were hidden there. They were kind of apprentices in a very Catholic union, you could call it. They were hidden because they thought that's the best place to be hidden if communists would come. But those soldiers of the counterrevolution killed them because they thought they were communists. And after that there was a trial, of course, because the Catholic party didn't want their own people slaughtered. And this lawyer, who was our friend, you know, and the friend of Eisner, defended those people.

WESCHLER: What was his name?





FEUCHTWANGER: Kaufmann. He was the owner of the avant-garde theater. He defended those murderers. He said to us, "Although I am from the other side of the party, I think we have to be just and also defend those people who don't know, who have erred and are left in their wrong opinions and didn't know better." So he defended them, and they were not very much punished.

But this was not the end of the whole thing. The end of the whole thing was that Mrs. Deutsch, who was the owner of this apartment who made this party, she was called to court and should have been deported. She was accused of having a house of ill repute, and also that she had a light in more than one room and heated more than one room--which was not true. My husband and Bruno Frank have been called as witnesses against her, because we were there. We were present when this party took place. There my husband has been asked, "Did you think that people at this party were communists?" And my husband said, "There was a daughter of the baron from a very right-wing family in East Prussia; she was there, but I didn't think it was an East Prussian aristocratic assembly." [laughter] And then they asked him, "We heard that there were mattresses on the floor. Was it for the purpose of sleeping with the women?" My husband said, "I resent that. My wife was with me." And things like that. So finally she couldn't be condemned for



ill repute: there was nothing which would help to this accusation. But she has been condemned for being against the law of coals and light, something like that. And she had to pay also for that, but this wouldn't have been [bad except that] she was then deported; she had to leave.

WESCHLER: She was deported.

FEUCHTWANGER: Deported, ja.

WESCHLER: Out of Bavaria?

FEUCHTWANGER: Out of Bavaria, ja, then out--I think out of Bavaria, ja. But I think she went to Berlin; I'm not sure. She was Austrian. And then my husband and Bruno Frank, they said, "Now that we had to go this long way, and we couldn't even help her"--because she was immediately arrested and had to go to jail until she was deported. So my husband said, "Let's ask at least what is due to us. We had some fee coming to us as witnesses." So they asked. My husband was asked what he is doing [since the fee is based on] the profession. So he said, "I am a writer." The official said, "What do you want?" He said, "I want ten marks for my time." "You don't get that. Not even a doctor would get that. You get two marks." And then Bruno Frank said, "Yes, and I was in the war and I have a maimed leg"--or something like that--"so we had to take a taxi; we couldn't take the streetcar." He was replied, "You are not allowed to take a taxi. I don't pay a taxi;



I pay you ten cents for a streetcar." [laughter] Afterwards, when we met Mrs. Deutsch, after the whole thing was over and we met her later, I think in Berlin, she told us that she was not badly treated in jail, but it was terrible because she was the only woman there. She was so much guarded that she could not even go to where people usually go alone. The guard was always with her, and she, of course, had great misgivings about that. But then the man said, "Oh, sit down finally! I'm a married man." [laughter] This is Munich, you know.

WESCHLER: I wanted to go back to the time of Eisner's assassination and take the political events a little bit more slowly. I must say, for instance, that I am surprised to hear of Erich Mühsam as a police chief.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja. I don't know if he was a chief, but he was at the police always; he was supervising the police.

WESCHLER: Okay, well, we might take that a little bit more slowly and flesh it out. First of all, tell a little bit about what happened with Eisner's assassination. Who was this count?

FEUCHTWANGER: He was a young man, a Count Arco of a very old aristocratic family, and he thought he has to do that. It was mostly what I told you, how after the censorship was abolished, the articles about Eisner were then so vicious that he thought he has to do that.



WESCHLER: What kinds of articles, what kinds of things were said about Eisner?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, that he is a communist and that everything is wrong and nothing is better since he is there, that there is no money there and nothing to eat there, and that everything was his fault. And, yes--no, I forgot that: [Count Arco said that] the real reason was that Eisner had made a speech and said, "We have to admit that Germany is guilty of the war; we began the war." There was an enormous scandal immediately. Eisner thought that [since] the Treaty of Versailles was [just being formed], maybe the conditions would be better if the Germans admitted that they did that, and that it was not their fault because it was the kaiser and this government, and the people were innocent of all that. That's why he thought it would be good for the conditions of Versailles peace if the Germans would admit their guilt. I think it was the reason why he has been assassinated, and also because the newspapers immediately attacked him viciously.

WESCHLER: Let's pan for a second and talk about the Treaty of Versailles. How did people...?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, people were very upset about it. It was also very strong and strict. The people were already so poor and they had to pay so much and now also lost some country, Alsace-Lorraine, and so. They were very upset about





it.

WESCHLER: Was that also true of the Bohemian community?

FEUCHTWANGER: I think yes; in a way, yes.

WESCHLER: How did you feel?

FEUCHTWANGER: We didn't speak much about it, but we felt that it was tough. But on the other hand, we always thought, all those people around us thought, that maybe it's better that we had to have these tough conditions so people would think longer before they would make another war. So they would see that when a war is lost, then you have to pay for it.

WESCHLER: How did you feel about the War Guilt Clause?

FEUCHTWANGER: Of course we found out that we were guilty of the war.

WESCHLER: Did you feel, did the people...?

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja. You remember what Wedekind said.

WESCHLER: Right, right.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja. That was always our opinion. But it was not so much the people, and it was not so much Bavaria. There was a very great difference. It was really the emperor who did that.

WESCHLER: Okay, well, Eisner is then assassinated. What happened? Who took over?

FEUCHTWANGER: There took over then the communistic side of the government. One man [Alois Lindner] who was a real communist--he was a navy man, you know, those who



began already to make the revolution--he shot the socialist parliamentarian, the deputy [Erhard Auer], and he was very badly wounded. He wasn't dead, but very badly wounded. And I think another one was shot. He went into the parliament, right away when he saw the blood, when he saw Eisner lying in his blood--that was in front of the parliament--he ran into the parliament and just shot blindly. He loved Eisner--all those people liked him very much--and he was absolutely mad, you know, and insane, by this experience. He just shot....

WESCHLER: Was he aiming to kill the right-wing people?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, it was a socialist who he [shot]. But he was a communist, and the socialists and the communists were already not on very good terms. But Auer was saved later, this socialist deputy.

WESCHLER: Count Arco, however, was right-wing.

FEUCHTWANGER: He was to the right, ja, ja.

WESCHLER: Well, what then happened? First of all, where were you at the time that you heard about the assassination and how did you react?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, it was a very sad story. We were at home, and somebody called us and said, "Let's go and see what happened in the street." You never knew in your home what had happened. So we went around and came to a place, a kind of open park, and there we saw terrible



things. There was a man who was standing directly beside me, and the soldiers--they called them the White Guards, the counterrevolution--they shot at people just without any reason or so. And the man beside me was hit. He was hit from a bullet which ricocheted off a nearby house and then ricocheted also off the watch which was in his pocket; so he was not wounded. The bullet fell just down before me. But then, on the other side of the street, we saw a small man, an older man, running terribly with his arms up. The soldiers shouted, "Arms up!"--you know, so he wouldn't shoot or something. He was a very poor man. He ran, and they ran after him, and then they just hit him with their rifles until he was dead. We saw that before our eyes.

WESCHLER: That was at the time that Eisner was assassinated?

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, that was when the White Guard came, when they made war against Bavaria, against Munich.

WESCHLER: But that was not the same day that Eisner was assassinated; it was later on.

FEUCHTWANGER: No, no, when the counterrevolution came.

WESCHLER: Okay. Let's talk a little bit about the period between Eisner's assassination and the counterrevolution.

FEUCHTWANGER: It didn't take long, you know.

WESCHLER: How long did it take? Eisner was assassinated on February 21, 1919, and then what happened, in terms of



days? Did the communists take over after Eisner's assassination?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, in a way they took over; they also took over the newspapers. But it wasn't much different. There was still nothing to eat, and people were afraid, and we were not afraid, [laughter] and that was all. But I recognized that people were very much afraid. But when the funeral of Eisner was, they were all jubilant that he was now dead, the same people who welcomed him so much.

And then came the White Guards. There were bitter battles on their way from the north, from Prussia; they killed a lot of people on their way, a lot of peasants who were suspected of being communists, because there were these Peasant and Soldier Councils, you know. They just killed the people.

Then there was another thing. After they had killed so many people, a kind of [left-wing] terror group was organized. Another group, which belonged to the side of Ludendorff--they were kind of mystic, anti-Semitic, and antiliberal--this group [the Thule Gesellschaft] had been taken prisoner by the communists. They were imprisoned in a school. And the others who heard about that, when they heard that their friends had been killed by the soldiers who came to Munich, they broke into the school and killed those people, their hostages. [pause in tape] The





hostages [were being held] so that nothing else would happen; so that the soldiers wouldn't kill too many people, they held this group as hostages. But this other group of ruffians, the soldiers from the revolution, they invaded the school and killed all those people, all those hostages. Everybody was terribly upset; the government, even the communists, were terribly upset. It had not been in their intention to do that; they just wanted to keep them as hostages so that the others wouldn't kill so many. And this was a turning point for the whole thing, because then, of course, this has been made up enormously that it was the government who did that, and there ensued an enormous bloodshed afterwards. That's what I told you about, when the blood came out from the slaughterhouse under the door. And the denunciations. It was a terrible thing.

WESCHLER: Who was this, what you called "the White Guards"? Were they the Freikorps? Is this the same group?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, not the Freikorps; it was the socialist army.

WESCHLER: The White Guards were the socialists?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, we called them the White Guards. But they were not those people who were with the Nazis. The Freikorps were the Nazis, but this was the German government.

WESCHLER: And they were the ones who came down to put down



the communists?

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, because they were socialists. It was [Friedrich] Ebert.

WESCHLER: Ebert sent them down to put down the communists, and the communists...?

FEUCHTWANGER: The Räteregierung, ja. It was very near the communists. But nothing would have happened if they wouldn't have come. Probably it would have been very bad because no money was there, no taxes came in, and things like that. The people were very unfriendly to the government and didn't pay their taxes probably. But nothing of bloodshed would have happened except for this man--Lindner was his name--this sailor who killed the socialist deputy.

WESCHLER: It sounds like total chaos.

FEUCHTWANGER: It was a little bit. But not so chaotic as you think, because you had to find out who was who. After Eisner was killed, his party and the party of the communists took over. The only thing which happened was that two people were killed in the parliament from this mad sailor. But this has nothing to do with the government. A man who wanted to avenge Eisner: all right, he saw him lying in his blood and ran into the parliament and began to shoot there. That was the whole thing what happened during the Räteregierung, nothing else, until the soldiers came from the north. They were called by those who were against



the Eisner government or the successors of the Eisner government; they called them in Berlin to send troops. When the troops came, they killed everybody who was suspected of communism.

There were terrible denunciations, and I want to tell you about it. For instance, I had a help who came to me. She was living far out in Schwabing also, in a little house, and there were several very little houses around a court. The landlord wanted one of the little houses back, and there was somebody living in it. And it was a law, which also was from the Räteregierung, the Soviet, that they could not put anybody out who had not another apartment. So he couldn't get those people out. He wanted this little house for his daughter. So all what he did was he took a--there was also a law from the government, from the Räteregierung, a law that nobody could have arms. All the arms had to be delivered to the armory; everybody had to bring their arms there. (For instance, in our house, in our apartment, there were lots of rifles because the general was a hunter and he had a lot of arms. He lived in his estate in the country, and he came and took all the arms out of his cabinet and buried them in the English Garden because he was afraid for himself, and also for us. It wouldn't be.... Ach! We were always in the middle of that!) Then this landlord of our help, he wanted the little house for his



daughter, and because he couldn't put out this man, he took a rifle--which didn't belong to this man; he just found a rifle some way--and he buried it in the courtyard and called the police. He said, "This man is a communist. He has a rifle buried in the courtyard." And this man has been arrested and shot. Just so he could have the house for his daughter. Things like that happened every day.

WESCHLER: About how long a period are we talking now?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, I wouldn't know that anymore; I'd have to look in the history books. [laughter]

WESCHLER: Is it months, or just weeks?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, a very short time. And then what happened in our house, our apartment: we got two eggs, what was then a great rarity. To make it bigger, not to just eat them as eggs, I wanted to make a big omelette out of it with flour so it would get more. I wanted to make it bigger, so I separated the egg yolk from the white and beat it so it would be higher. I went to the balcony, which looked down--I told you that this view from the kitchen was to the gardens of the palace of the prince, the brother of the king. And in this palace was stationed this White Guard, the army of the soldiers who had to put down the Räteregierung. When I beat the egg white, all of a sudden soldiers came and said, "You have a machine gun hidden!" Because it makes a noise like....

WESCHLER: I see. They thought this noise was a machine





gun.

FEUCHTWANGER: I beat the egg white for snow--you call it "snow," too, I think--and they came and were looking for the machine gun. It was very dangerous, of course. So they looked everywhere in the apartment. We had in those days big stoves, enough to heat the rooms, made of tile--tile stoves, high, not stove to cook but to heat--and they looked in the stoves. They looked everywhere, on the toilet and everywhere, and they couldn't find the machine gun. So finally they were ready to leave, and then one opened up a drawer of my husband's desk. And what was there? The first thing...Spartacus. [The Spartacists] were a terror group in Berlin. It was much more serious in Berlin than in Munich, and this was a terror group in Berlin who burned, I think, the newspaper houses and things like that. So that was of course a very dangerous situation: we were standing there, and here is Spartacus. This was a manuscript of the play of Brecht which later was called Drums in the Night; but at first it was Spartacus. My husband didn't want to betray Brecht, because Brecht lived in the neighborhood. One of the soldiers said, "What is that? Did you write that?" So my husband said, "Yes." And then another soldier came and looked at it and said, "Oh, that's a play. Ah, now I know," he said. "You are a playwright, I have seen a play of yours in Dusseldorf...."



TAPE NUMBER: VIII, SIDE ONE

JULY 10, 1975 and JULY 14, 1975

WESCHLER: We are waiting breathlessly to find out what happened: a group of soldiers have just found Brecht's play Spartacus inside your husband's desk.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, and this one said that he has seen a play of my husband with the title of Warren Hastings. He was very excited about it--he thought it a great play--and he said to the other people, "This man is all right. Let's go. He just writes plays." And so the danger was over. But if he hadn't known that, we would have immediately been arrested, and you never knew what [might have] happened. They didn't make any long trials or so; they just shot the people.

I didn't quite finish this thing where we saw this man slain in the public park. We had been with friends. One was Alfred Wolfenstein, who was also a poet, and rather well known, and another was Friedrich Burschell, who was an essayist. Both were very well known writers. We were with them together, but when we saw this man slain, we lost our pleasure and our curiosity. It didn't bring us much peace, so we went home and left the other two there. And we were home not long before there came a ring. The bell rang, and



a man in uniform was standing there. He said, "I am from the Reichswehr." (It was the Reichswehr who made what we called the White Guard.) "But don't be afraid. I have nothing to do with this invasion from the north. I came back from the war, and I had nothing to eat and nothing to do, and it was the only thing to do, to go to the Reichswehr. I am not an anticommunist or antisocialist; I am without any.... I sympathize with them. But I am not a politician at all." (He was an officer, a lieutenant.) And he said, "I wanted only to tell you that your friend with whom you were at this public park has been arrested." Wolfenstein. I don't know about Burschell, I only know about Wolfenstein. They both, I think--no, it was only one who has been arrested, since they separated also right away. Somebody shouted, "This man is an intellectual!" He had black-rimmed glasses, and that was always the sign of the Schwabing intellectual.

So they arrested him and brought him into the castle where the king lived before. When he was brought into the castle [there was] a big room, a very beautiful room with works of art, and there was a general sitting in it. He said, "What are you doing in here? Here I am a prisoner!" And this was General Ludendorff, who made the war, the marshal. He has been arrested before and the White Guard didn't know yet that he was there arrested. He was arrested by the Räteregierung and was in the palace, very honored, and



then they brought in Wolfenstein, and he said, "What are you doing here? It is I who am arrested here!" So he thought he has to be alone and nobody else has the honor to stay with him.\* [laughter]

And this officer saw the whole thing. He went with the soldiers because he was curious what would happen to Wolfenstein. He knew him only by seeing him at the Café Stephanie, where all those writers always were. Then he heard what the soldiers spoke with each other, "What happens now? What are we doing with him?" He found out from their words that it's rather dangerous for Wolfenstein. So he went to Wolfenstein and said, "I am an officer, a lieutenant, and this is my man. I'll take care of him." So he took him out, and outside he said, [whispering] "Now try to go home without anybody seeing you." He just wanted to save him because he was sure the soldiers would kill him. That's why he came to us and said he wanted us to know what happened to Wolfenstein and that he is all right now. So all those things, you know, were always so mixed up with humanity and justice and helpfulness--all that with the terrible cruelties which happened.

WESCHLER: What was the response of the general Munich population, and then also the Bohemian group, to the arrival of the Reichswehr?

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\* But see alternate version of this story at the end of Tape X, Side 1. In her proofreading, Mrs. Feuchtwanger noted here, "I think the other version is the right one."





FEUCHTWANGER: The response is what the newspapers write. And since the newspapers were taken over again by the old owners of the monarchy and so, people believed what was in the newspapers. They had also no other possibility to know.

WESCHLER: The newspapers were pro-Right.

FEUCHTWANGER: Pro-Right. And the Right were the socialists. But the socialists didn't know that they were used by the Right, by those people.

WESCHLER: How did you respond to the arrival of the White Guard?

FEUCHTWANGER: You can imagine how we responded. We were ourselves in danger.

WESCHLER: In general, that Schwabing community would have been against the White Guard.

FEUCHTWANGER: Of course they were. They were all in danger, in great danger. They didn't go to the coffee houses.

[laughter]

Then we--yes--when we went home after we were together in this public park.... This was the Ludwigstrasse, where also the great library is, and there is also the armory. Some people with arms, who were kind of voluntary vigilantes, they spoke with us and said, "You come with us. You have to take also rifles with you. We have to show those Schwabinger--they called them those Schwabinger Gesindel,



those ruffians or something like that--"we have to show them. You have to take, everybody, also your wife, has to take a rifle." So we had to go with them. They ordered us. We went in and took some rifles, and before we left we put them in a corner and ran away. [laughter] And then a man came and spoke with us and said, "Do you see a Jew today on the street?" [laughter]

WESCHLER: And you said?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, we didn't say anything. We were cowards. [laughter]

WESCHLER: I wanted to step back a little bit now, and talk about the national, and particularly Berlin, politics.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, but I think we haven't finished yet, because an important thing comes now, not in Berlin but in Munich. Before the White Guard took over, they tried to defend Munich against those Guards which were nearing Munich. One of those who wanted to try was [Ernst] Toller. He was a kind of a general [laughter] of the defense of Munich. He met Lion's brother, the youngest brother, the hero, on the street, on the Ludwigstrasse.

WESCHLER: [Bertold] Feuchtwanger.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja. The Ludwigstrasse was a big street where the library was and many of the public buildings-- the university, the armory, many beautiful public buildings; it was a beautiful street. And Toller met Bubi--that's



how we called him--and said, "You have to help us. You have experience in the war." Toller was also a soldier, but he was not so much in the middle of the battle. He said, "We know that you had so many orders and iron crosses, and you have to help us." So Bubi went with him to the outskirts to see the defenses of Munich, of the Räteregierung. And he said it was so terrible poor, it was just--he said, "No. You want me to do that? No. I know what war is. I go home." [laughter] And Toller--they went on. They began to shoot already. The bullets and cannons, the artillery was already over our heads. We could hear them coming over our heads. Finally, of course, the White Guard had an easy victory. It was not very difficult. They came in, and there was a man on the Siegestor, you know, which is like the Arc of Triumph in Paris; it was where we lived near the Academy with this arc. They came on horses in triumph, and on one of the horses was an actor [Fritz Kampers] who played in a play which Lion had directed at the Volkstheatre. He never was in the war. He always told the people he cannot be: they cannot make theater without him; he has to be excused of war service. So he was always there, and he played the young lovers. But now he was sitting high on the horse and he was seeing us, so from above he just greeted us as if he would be a general. Then a man beside us said, "Now that is all what



we have from the war, all the victories--finally they conquered Munich!"

WESCHLER: At least the German army knows how to do something right.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja. [laughter] But this actor was so funny--and I remember even his name--he was so funny on his horse looking to us down, you know, the ordinary mortals.

WESCHLER: I haven't yet gotten a sense of what this army was that came. Was it an organized army?

FEUCHTWANGER: Not at all. They had no arms; they had nothing, just the soldiers, some soldiers who were against the Prussians.

WESCHLER: No, I'm talking about the army that came, the White Guard. They were an organized army?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, yes, they were very organized. It was from Berlin, where there was already the socialist government--Ebert. And then Toller had to hide because he was in great danger. He was hidden in an apartment, and he had to dye his hair red, and he was in a cabinet....

WESCHLER: I should think that dyeing his hair red would give the game away.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja. [laughter] But he had beautiful black hair, and he was in a closet, hidden, and somebody denounced him, of course. He was arrested and had to be five years in jail. He hadn't done anything, because he had not the





possibility to do anything; he just had his ideas. He didn't kill anybody; he was not violent. He always said to the people, "Please show the others that we are better." And then that was Toller, with his defenseless defense, who inspired my husband to write this Thomas Wendt. Ja, that's why I always wanted to make known this kind of transition.

WESCHLER: Well, I'm glad somebody here knows where this interview is going. Before we come to Thomas Wendt, I wanted to talk a little bit about the national scene. I wanted to name a couple names, and maybe you have some observations about them. Let's talk a little bit about Ebert. How was he thought of in Munich?

FEUCHTWANGER: He was like what you would call an "Uncle Tom." They didn't call him like that, but that's what you would say here. I think he was a nice man and he didn't know better. He was a good administrator. It wasn't so bad, his government, but immediately the military took over, and the big armament people and the big industry took over, and he didn't feel that. He was used by them. But he was not a bad man if the others wouldn't have been worse.

WESCHLER: Was he also assassinated?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, but [Matthias] Erzberger was assassinated. Erzberger was from the Catholic party--it's called the



Centrum party--and he was most instrumental to end the war. He went to the pope, and he also was at Versailles. He was accused of....

WESCHLER: He was the one who signed the Versailles Treaty.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, that's it, ja. He was in the government, from the Catholic party, but he was more hated than Ebert because he signed this terrible--what they said is terrible--contract in Versailles. That's why he was assassinated by, you could say, already the predecessors of the Nazis.

WESCHLER: What about the Spartacists, and Rosa Luxemburg and...?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, this was at this time, I guess. I didn't know much about her because we lived in Munich and they were in Berlin.

WESCHLER: Were they only a Berlin group, or were there Spartacists in Munich also?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, not at all in Munich, only in Berlin. But Luxemburg had nothing to do with the Spartacists. She was just a Communist. It was her party, a serious party, but not violent or so, nor revengeful. She was a member of the parliament.

WESCHLER: How was she regarded by the people in your circle?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, many admired her, but I didn't know



enough. I was a little afraid; I didn't know enough about her. I only read what was in the newspapers, you know; we didn't know much about the whole thing. We were always in the province and a little slow. So I didn't know what really happened with her, but other people who knew more--for instance, Dr. Kaufmann, the lawyer, he knew about all those things; [Karl] Liebknecht and so on. He was a great admirer of Liebknecht. But I didn't know anything. I thought we would be glad to have just socialism. But she was a Communist. Later I heard that she was a great woman and also Liebknecht a great man. But I just was not enough "in the know" about what happened there.

WESCHLER: In particular, do you happen to know what Bertolt Brecht thought of Luxemburg?

FEUCHTWANGER: I think he was an admirer of Luxemburg, but at this time he was not in Munich. He was either in Augsburg, where he is at home, or--yes, he was most of the time in Augsburg, because he told us that he made also a revolution in Augsburg. A friend of his who was a doctor, they took horses--and the other was Caspar Neher, the painter who made the sets--those three, they took horses and rode through Augsburg and announced the revolution. [laughter] That's what he told us.

WESCHLER: The next time we talk we'll talk in more detail about Brecht. What about the Freikorps? Was that...?

FEUCHTWANGER: That was much later.



WESCHLER: That was not at this time yet?

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, it was a little later but not much.

[Georg] Escherich, I think was the name of the man. They tried to be on good terms with the Russians even, because they wanted arms from Russia. You know it wasn't allowed to have arms or planes after the Versailles peace treaty, but they got arms in Russia. They had also their pilots trained in Russia. I knew some of them. They told me that. They didn't know that I was Jewish, and I wanted to hear what they had to say. I met some of them skiing and so. Once there was a very funny thing: one was a great admirer of my husband. He said, "You know you have to read a book. I read a book now, and you have to read it. If you don't have it, I will give it to you." He was very much in love with me because we were skiing together. He said, "This book is called The Ugly Duchess, and you have to read it. Every word is as if written by Ludendorff!" [laughter] That was the highest thing he could say. Those things happened to me. Later I found out he was one of those who-- some of his friends assassinated Rathenau. He was from a submarine, a commander of a submarine. He told me about the revolution in Turkey. He was there, and he said that this dictator, [Kemal] Ataturk, he abolished the fez, you know, this hat--that was a kind of religion, the fez-- and every peasant who had been found with a fez has





immediately been hanged. He said, "The whole roads were full of--from every tree hanged somebody with a fez." That's what he told me.

WESCHLER: No doubt speaking admiringly of that.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, oh yes.

WESCHLER: Well, that's a bit in the future. Maybe we should right now begin to talk about Thomas Wendt. I guess the way to phrase this question is, what was Lion doing during all of this?

FEUCHTWANGER: Lion was just looking at this and taking it in. He wanted to see everything and to hear everything and to speak with everybody. He was also invited by a lady [Maria Poschart] who was a friend of ours; she had a big party--I don't know; I wasn't there: I don't know anymore why. And there she met a man who introduced himself to Lion with the name of Amman. He was also from the Reichswehr, a high officer, and he said--maybe I should have mentioned that they murdered almost everybody they arrested, the soldiers. For instance, Gustav Landauer: he was a great writer and was also in the government; he was a Marxist, and he was in the government together with Eisner. He was in charge of the theater, because he was mostly interested in literature and in writing. He wrote about Heine and about Shakespeare in books which are still now being read. His wife translated Oscar Wilde's Salomé.



He was a man with a great beard, very tall, and very mild. He was somebody who couldn't even kill a fly. He was arrested also after they took over in Munich; they had to take him to one of the breweries on the other side of the river rather far away. He always thought the human being is good; you can do something if you only speak with them. So he began when they went through those green parks which they had to traverse; he wanted to tell them what's it all about, the revolution, and that it is only for the well-being of the people and things like that. But the soldiers, they were in a hurry; they wanted to go back to their girls and dance or something. Anyway, they were bored about this old man who was always preaching, so they just killed him with the rear of their rifles. And then my husband met this man who I told you about. He was the superior of those soldiers, and he said to my husband, "I was very angry with my soldiers that they killed Gustav Landauer. I told them always, don't kill any intellectuals. We will have the bad articles afterwards--they give it afterwards to the newspapers." It was his only regret, that later they would have trouble with the newspapers. So that was the mentality of those people. You asked me how people reacted. He was not sorry that a great man has been killed, a great personality, a great human being; he just said, "We have only trouble with the



newspaper."

WESCHLER: So Lion was taking it in....

FEUCHTWANGER: He took all that in, ja, ja, and he used it to write.

WESCHLER: And at what point did the idea of Thomas Wendt come to him?

FEUCHTWANGER: I think during the Räteregierung with Toller.

WESCHLER: So actually he had begun thinking about writing it before the counterrevolution.

FEUCHTWANGER: Also there was another, for instance--let's say, the way to write. He was tired of writing plays like classical plays. He wanted a new form of play. He thought that ideas cannot be expressed when you always have to write five acts or something like that. It should be more.... When you write in epic form, you can better follow the flow of your thought. That's why he wanted to try this, what he called the epic drama. That was what influenced Brecht so much when he found out. My husband always said the epic drama existed already before. In India it has been used, and Shakespeare wrote in a kind of epic drama, because he didn't fit in acts--he had little scenes. That is what Lion wanted to do, and that was the form, his new form in which he wanted to express his new ideas.

WESCHLER: But Thomas Wendt was intended, of course, for



the stage.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, in a way, but he was not so much interested in the stage: he was just interested to write it.

WESCHLER: He intended that people would just read it, perhaps, more than see it.

FEUCHTWANGER: You know he didn't intend to be read or played. He had to write; he had to write himself. He had to express himself, and it was a second thought whether it would be performed or printed or read. First of all, he had to write--he wouldn't want to think about what followed afterwards.

WESCHLER: So he began writing Thomas Wendt during the Räteregierung and he was still writing it during the counterrevolution, I take it. Or had he finished already, during the time of the White Guard?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, it was about the same time. I don't know exactly when he began to sit down and write because he spoke about it and was always--I think he ate and drank and slept with it, you could say.

WESCHLER: Well, why don't you tell us a little bit about the play. What is the play about?

FEUCHTWANGER: It is about a writer who goes through the same experiences as Toller did in the Räteregierung. And there is a girl who is a kind of symbol of the people, who always went from one to the other, from one man to the other,





from one idea to the other, and it was kind of--but she was absolutely human; you wouldn't know that it was a symbol of the people who are so difficult to hold in one direction. Then also the different experiences that this writer had during the--and most of all, when he saw that it didn't come out what he wanted to do. He thought he shouldn't write anymore; he should do something. Writing is not the right thing; he should act. Then he wrote this poem about "The Song of the Fallen" in this mood.

WESCHLER: "The Song of the Fallen" which Lion had written in 1915 was then put in Thomas Wendt's words--it was said that he had written it.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja. And most of all--there is another man in this play, this novel-play or epic-play, who was called Herr Schulz; that's like John Doe here, something like that, so everybody could be named like that--it's a name very common. This man becomes very rich, first during the war because he has delivered merchandise to the army, and then he was also the same during the revolution. He always used those political movements for his own profit. This girl was with the writer and later with a rich man. He was an aesthete. He was a manufacturer but at the same time an aesthete. His wife, the wife of this aesthete, has--by chance somebody threw a stone during the revolution, and she lost her sight. She was such a wonderful woman with understanding. And this poet, this



writer has been excited, terribly upset about this thing, that the revolution--you know it's always symbolic, but you don't feel it; it's just when you think about it--that the revolution does this, that an innocent has to suffer in the revolution. Finally this girl, who was in love at first with him and then with this manufacturer, at the end she went over to Herr Schulz, to this man who is a profiteer, because she wanted luxury. You cannot always live with ideas, you see. It began when the writer found this girl when she wanted to go and drown herself. He saved her from drowning. Herr Schulz--in those days, it was still the war--had seduced her and then he threw her out. She wanted to drown herself, and the writer saved her from drowning and helped her on. But then she ends by following Schulz again. In the meantime she has become a real woman, not this little girl anymore.

WESCHLER: It seems like a very despairing theme.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, it is. And he says, "I can say that everything what happens to the people, in the end it is always Herr Schulz."

There is also a scene when he goes to the sea, and he's so desperate that.... There are high waves; it's at night, a great storm, and he's all alone on the beach. And he shouts into the waves. He is so desperate that he is shouting into the waves. And then he sees people who were



working, weaving the nets, and he says maybe that's the right thing to do, just weaving or working in the earth and not doing anything. My husband always was [torn] between doing and not doing, between the Indian philosophy of not doing and.... Or as Goethe said, for instance, "Conscience has only the one who is contemplating; those who act have no conscience." That's a rough translation. And that's what he said, that maybe the only thing was to sing and work. Like they sing when they bring their boats in. It's a kind of poetry. But you have to read it; you cannot have any idea when you hear it from me like that.

WESCHLER: But it does give us a chance to talk about Lion's own attitudes during those times. By the time of the invasion of the White Guard and so forth, do you think that Lion had more or less become resigned and despairing about the possibility of politics?

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja, absolutely. Ja, ja. That's what he said, how in the end, it's always Herr Schulz who is victorious.

WESCHLER: So the play is very much a representation of his own political feelings at that time.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, in a way, yes. No--you could not say absolutely, you know, because in a way he was also an optimist and thought maybe it shouldn't be like that, like it was in the play.



WESCHLER: How did that come out? In what way was he an optimist?

FEUCHTWANGER: When he wrote this play, he thought about that. But that doesn't mean that he always thought about that. In a play you have to stay in one line. But he was not one; he was more people, in a way.

WESCHLER: Could you tell some stories that would help us see the other sides of his feelings around that time.

FEUCHTWANGER: Later on he made the little monographs, and he said, "Maybe you ask me after all I have been through--prisoners of war and Hitler and concentration camps--you ask me what I would say now, and I say I would do the whole thing again." So that was his attitude--that he welcomed good and bad, you could say.

WESCHLER: By the time of the White Guard, did he have any political line that he was pursuing, or had he more or less become apolitical again?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, I think he has decidedly changed. Also in his attitude to literature and to his work, this attitude that l'art is only for itself and has no other purpose, he had changed entirely.

WESCHLER: He renounced that. Now, he would rather, he now saw the political....

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, he thought that it is not enough to make only l'art pour l'art but that it has to have a purpose.





WESCHLER: In a way, this brings us to Brecht, who was to be very influenced by Thomas Wendt.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, he was more or less influenced by the form, the new form of the play. Until then his two plays were only like ordinary, like other plays. After that he began to write a kind of epic writing.

WESCHLER: Well, I think what we will do is stop for today and start with Brecht next time. One last question: how was Thomas Wendt received?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, that was also very difficult. It has been planned to be played by this avant-garde theater, but then came another putsch, the [Friedrich] Kapp Putsch, and everything, all the theaters, had to be closed and the whole thing was off. Then this same director [Erich Engel] who wanted to make it in this avant-garde theater wanted to make it at the State Theatre. Then there came another putsch--I don't remember, something always happened. It could not be played because the actors were afraid of riots or something like that.

WESCHLER: And was it ever played?

FEUCHTWANGER: I think it has been played in other cities, but I have never seen it played. Mostly in Prussia and the northern countries.



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WESCHLER: Today we're going to set, in effect, the backdrop for Brecht, who we'll be talking about either at the end of today or tomorrow, and we're going to begin by doing a little bit more detailed discussion of theater in Munich. Munich sounds, the more I talk to you about it, like an incredible place for theater. One thing which you had just mentioned in passing, which seems to me to be a delightful story, is the story of the day you met Ibsen. You might begin with that.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, when I was still a child. I was always fighting on the street with the boys. Even when they were taller, I didn't mind; I was very strong and I could run very fast. Of course, there was a lot of shouting and name calling which was always necessary to arouse the boys. But one day a little man came by, a little old man with white sideburns and white bushy hair, and he stopped and said to me, "A girl shouldn't shout so much." Then he went on. It didn't make much impression, but still I remembered his look. I was not angry about him; it intrigued me that somebody would tell that to me: I didn't consider myself a girl; I was one of the boys. Later on, I saw a picture of him in Die Jugend--that is this periodical which was mostly fun and also some poetry--there, on the front page, was a drawing of a man with two girls running over a lawn, and this



was the same man who spoke with me. I found out and saw that it was Ibsen. Then I heard that he is always sitting in a tea room along the Maximilianstrasse, across from the State Theatre (it was then the Royal Theatre). There he was sitting in a very beautiful old palace building which was used now for commercial things--it was a little tea room--one could see him sitting at the window writing his plays.

WESCHLER: So the man who wrote The Doll's House was simultaneously telling you that little girls should not be shouting.

FEUCHTWANGER: No, he didn't say "little girls"; "A girl should not shout." [laughter]

WESCHLER: That's even worse. [laughter] Well, I think that all Ibsen scholars will benefit from that story. We, meanwhile, who are interested in Munich, can go on. Gradually the Torggelstube ceased to be as important as a meeting ground, primarily because of the founding of the Kammerspiele, and you might talk a little bit about when this gradual change took place, and how it took place.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, I didn't know when the theater has been founded because we were not there; it was before the war, I think [1912]. But we were always at the performances there because it was an avant-garde theater in Schwabing. It became always more avant-gardish and also the plans for playing were very interesting. Mostly they played [August]



Strindberg, who was then very much in regard with the Schwabing clan, which was a special clan.

This was where this sculptress, Lotte Pritzel, was the reigning queen, I could say. She didn't look very impressing, but you could recognize her from far away on the street on account of her walk. She walked only from the knees down: her whole body didn't move; only the knees moved. It was a kind of shuffling. Her abdomen was like the women of [Alessandro] Botticelli: it was more sliding out, and her head was not very straight. She looked a little bit like a somnambule, like sleeping when she walked. Her eyes were also--she didn't look at anybody. She looked very sexy with all this--without knowing it probably. She was a kind of reigning queen of another clan--which was the contrary of Wedekind's clan, but at the same time all of them were also admirers of Wedekind. And to both clans Eric Mühsam was welcomed. She had several friends, of course, and a great love life, but nobody knew exactly what it was. In those days, all was very discreet. They were only speaking about Schwabing as a whole, but no names were named. There were two brothers who looked very much like the puppets or the wax dolls which she sculptured. And she herself looked absolutely like her dolls: a kind of rococo but stylized, a long stylized rococo. Those dolls were made on thin iron rods.





and there were many exhibitions of those dolls. And you could see from the dolls what kind of mind she had. Those two brothers were both there and looked absolutely like these doll-men; one [Fritz Strich] was a professor of literature at the university, and the other [Walter Strich] was a writer. She probably had an affair with both of them, but nobody knew exactly. Nobody, nothing was known. This was much more attractive than if there was all that kind of gossip about it. Rainer Maria Rilke was there, and the new director of the Kammerspiele, Otto Falckenberg, who came from Reinhardt; and one actor who was accepted, who also came from Reinhardt, Albert Steinrück; and we were sometimes there. But we didn't belong so much: that had a special reason. In this clan, it was so exclusive that they considered that anybody who had a success couldn't be something, because success meant that the whole great audience, the people, would like what he writes or performs and they were only for the very choosy, things which couldn't have any success.

WESCHLER: So Lion was too successful.

FEUCHTWANGER: He was too successful with his plays. But the funny thing was that they liked me much more than my husband. They called me the "queen of the night." I had always the feeling--I should have been flattered, but I had the feeling that it was a kind of irony; I couldn't quite



grasp it. [laughter]

WESCHLER: They were a different group than....

FEUCHTWANGER: They were absolutely different. They still admired Wedekind. He belonged to this kind--he belonged to the development of this clan--but what they mostly admired was Strindberg, and mostly Strindberg in contrast to Ibsen. Ibsen was so well done; everybody could understand what he wrote. But [Strindberg] was mystic, and you could explain it in every kind of way like you wanted to do, and that was much more for their taste. And director Falckenberg, who was also a writer, he came from Reinhardt. The first performance of his career in Munich was Die Geistensonate, The Ghost Sonata by Strindberg. I remember it began with a long table where they are sitting to eat for the dinner, and on the top of the table was a major. And one of the guests all of a sudden said--they were discussing something, I don't remember exactly what it was--"Take your corset off, Mr. Major." And this was really a changing of the whole literature in those days, just this one phrase, that something like that can be spoken. Of course, it was known that the military officials had corsets on to be straight and elegant, but it was not meant like that. It was more inside, the corset; it was a kind of restriction, an inside restriction.

WESCHLER: As we were talking about this before we turned



on the tape recorder, you said that at that point one realized that it was time to start listening to the words.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja, that is true, ja, ja. That's what we thought; at least I thought it's time to start listening to the new movement.

WESCHLER: But this group, this clan that the sculptress headed, was still a very aesthetic group, it was still l'art pour l'art.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, very much l'art pour l'art. And it was not very creative.

They didn't have new ideas, but they followed the new ideas very, very.... They were very much awake for everything new, but they didn't create anything. L'art pour l'art was still the reigning idea then. But of course Strindberg was the contrary of it. He was a moralist even more than Wedekind. My husband once wrote about Wedekind as a moralist. The moral of Wedekind was freedom of love and freedom between the sexes. But Strindberg was mostly suffering from love and suffering from the marriage. And also the fight between the two sexes.

WESCHLER: So it's rather ironic that his Schwabing group still clung to Strindberg in this way.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, it was because we listened. It was something new.

WESCHLER: What general period are we talking about now?



Was it after the war or during it?

FEUCHTWANGER: It was during the war, ja, ja. Because I remember that Wedekind died in 1918, and I remember a performance of The Awakening of Spring [Frühlings Erwachen] when he played himself in the play. Also it was a very funny story about performing because he was considered the greatest actor of his own plays. He never played anything....





TAPE NUMBER: VIII, SIDE TWO

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WESCHLER: We are in the middle of a story about Wedekind as an actor.

FEUCHTWANGER: He was considered--not only considered, he was really--the greatest actor of his own plays. He never played anything else but his own plays. He was not an actor: he was rather an antiactor. He ignored, didn't know even the most important rules of acting. Mostly each time, he was standing on the ramp and speaking to the audience. But his face was in constant movement; sometimes he looked like Mephistopheles, and then sometimes he was mild and wise. I never saw so many expressions in a face. The greatest actors of Germany played his roles, but nobody made this impression which he made. Once there was a special performance [of Frühlings Erwachen], a very modern kind of performance; it was modernized Wedekind, stylized in a way. But the young actors who came from Berlin, from Reinhardt, were more or less naturalistic, and also stylized, you could say; and they had other movements. Usually those actors have not these round movements and the round vowels. [The lead actress] was a human being and a real young girl. This play is about a girl who got pregnant and died during the abortion. She said always, "How could I get a child



if I didn't love this boy?" And then there was also a scene in the cemetery where one boy came who had committed suicide. He came to the funeral of this girl with his head under the arm. That was typical Wedekind. But before this girl was dead she played a scene together with Wedekind, and Wedekind became very furious and said, "Miss [Annemarie] Seidel, if you think you are playing Strindberg, I leave the stage." So she didn't play anymore like Strindberg. [laughter]

WESCHLER: So Wedekind did not like Strindberg.

FEUCHTWANGER: No, I wouldn't say he didn't like him; it was just not his style. He didn't want that his play would be performed in the style of Strindberg. I think he was knowledgeable enough to understand Strindberg. Both writers had influence on each other, but I don't know which one more to the other. Because he knew Strindberg. Also the wife of Strindberg [Frida Uhl] was in a kind of relationship with him, one of the wives of Strindberg.

WESCHLER: She lived near Munich?

FEUCHTWANGER: She lived in Austria, in the Alps of Austria, but that was very near to Munich. It was later, when she was divorced already. But there was something, because the daughter of Wedekind told me all also about it. There was a relationship between Wedekind and this woman who had been the wife of Strindberg, and maybe Strindberg was jealous



of Wedekind--I don't know. Something happened there, I'm not exactly sure. But this was always in the family, the literary family.

WESCHLER: Let's talk a little bit more about what it meant to people for the scene to shift from the Torggelistube to the Kammerspiele. What kind of life was there around the Kammerspiele? Was it also centered around taverns there?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, there were several taverns there, very cheap mostly, which was very important because during the war and after the war during the inflation, nobody had money, and we were all glad if you could only pay for a glass of wine. People didn't say anything, even the owners of those taverns, if somebody was sitting there the whole night with only one glass of wine; it was all understood that it belongs to the Kammerspiele and the Schwabing atmosphere. There was another tavern right beside [our Pfälzische Weinstube], which I think was called the Griechische Weinstube, the "Greek Wine Restaurant." And there was always Hitler sitting with his clan. He liked to sit among these Schwabing Bohemians, I would say.

WESCHLER: So, Hitler, the would-be artist himself...

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, maybe it had something to do with that.

WESCHLER: ...was in that group, and yet at the same time hating that group, too.



FEUCHTWANGER: Of course, he hated everything.

WESCHLER: We'll talk about Hitler in more detail later on.

[pause in tape] Later at the Kammerspiele....

FEUCHTWANGER: They played also the plays of my husband. They played Der Amerikaner, and it was not a success at all. It was not a very good play, but the director wanted to play it. There was a good part for his wife in it. But my husband didn't want even to have it played. He wrote it more or less because he was impressed by the Kirschgarten of Chekhov. This was written a little bit like the way the Kirschgarten was written. But he didn't write it for the theater, just to write another play. But by chance Falckenberg asked my husband if he has new plays and when Lion gave it to him, he wanted to play it. My husband was very sorry about it. He just said, "Yes, I wanted you to read it, but I don't want to perform it." But still it has been performed. And my husband was right. [laughter]

WESCHLER: What other theaters were there in Munich at that time besides the Kammerspiele?

FEUCHTWANGER: There was the Schauspielhaus and the State Theatre.

WESCHLER: And what were the different styles of theater?

FEUCHTWANGER: The State Theatre was the most old-fashioned, more classics and romantic, pathetic and rhetoric, while the Schauspielhaus was in between, because they were the





avant-garde theater, before the war. They were the first to play Wedekind. There was always a scandal there. Later on they played my husband's play Warren Hastings during the war, and also his play Jud Süß. And in the Kammerspiele, they wanted to play Vasantasena, the Indian play of King Sudraka which my husband not only adapted but wrote in new German verses. This was an enormous success and has been played over the whole of Germany. From then on, all his plays they wanted to play. Then my husband wrote The King and the Dancer. This was also an Indian play. The performance was also a great success, but it didn't follow up in the other cities.

WESCHLER: Which theater performed this now?

FEUCHTWANGER: The Kammerspiele for the works after Vasantasena--or even before Vasantasena. With Vasantasena, they couldn't find the right actress for a long time and they had a deadline for the contract. So they asked my husband--instead of paying [the penalty], damages or so--they asked him if it would be all right with him if they played another play; and this was The King and the Dancer. This was interesting insofar as the dancer was very beautifully built, a very young girl. She was absolutely brown because the painter who made the sets asked her to bathe in a certain chemical which was violet, violet crystals, which made the skin brown. It is an antiseptic



chemical. So she was almost naked, with a beautiful brown body, and she danced wonderful like the old Indian dancers--it was not sexual, it was just beautiful. She was all brown, and she didn't move very much, only like those dancers with their arms like serpents or snakes.

WESCHLER: What was the relationship of the two Mann brothers to the Schwabing community?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, Heinrich Mann was very much in the middle of it. But then during the war he married a very rich woman [Maria Kanova] and then in a way he had his own clan around himself in his apartment. But most of those people from Schwabing were invited. His wife was from Czechoslovakia, from Prague, and there were in the house of her father a lot of diplomats coming and going; those diplomats were also then invited in the apartment of Heinrich Mann, who was very much interested not only in politics but also in diplomatics. He always said the French are the only people who know what diplomacy is, and their own writers were ambassadors. So he had another kind of clan or society around himself. In those days, they were the more moneyed people and more elegant, but still he had this same preference for the Bohemian.

WESCHLER: How about Thomas Mann?

FEUCHTWANGER: Thomas Mann was far aloof. He lived in the other part of--we were all divided by the river Isar;



He lived on the other side of the Isar in a very elegant outskirt. He lived there with his wife [Katia]; and his friend, very near living, was Bruno Walter. Bruno Frank also lived in his neighborhood. And he never was seen in Schwabing or so. He had no relation to Schwabing, not even to his own brother.

WESCHLER: What did Schwabing think of him?

FEUCHTWANGER: They ignored him more or less. [laughter] Because he was considered very reactionary on account of his book; he was for the kaiser and for the war against France, for the First World War. And all those people in Schwabing were more or less liberal, against monarchy and for the revolution. He was not so much for that, Thomas Mann, but later on he changed. After Heinrich married, the division between the two brothers was even greater. The two wives didn't go along very well, or they didn't even want to know each other very well. But then Heinrich Mann was very sick, he had an appendectomy. And one of our friends made the conciliation--what do you call that? [pause in tape]

WESCHLER: Reconciliation. Someone else arranged for the reconciliation of Heinrich and Thomas Mann?

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, he was the correspondent of the Berliner Tageblatt before Adelt.

WESCHLER: What was his name?



FEUCHTWANGER: His name was Joachim Friedenthal.

WESCHLER: And how did this come about?

FEUCHTWANGER: He was a friend of Heinrich Mann and a great admirer of him. Also Heinrich Mann had much sympathy for him because he was also liberal and the Berliner Tageblatt was a liberal newspaper. Joachim Friedenthal was an admirer of literature and of great men, so he thought it is a pity that those two brothers would be enemies. Also, since everybody thought that maybe Heinrich Mann was in very dangerous condition, so he went to Thomas Mann and told him that Heinrich Mann is so sick and has to have this operation and if it couldn't be the thing to do to visit him. And Thomas Mann immediately followed his counsel and came to his brother. They had both tears in their eyes, and they said they should have done that a long time before. From then on they didn't see each other very much, but at least there was no hate anymore.

WESCHLER: This was near the end of the war sometime?

FEUCHTWANGER: I think so, ja. Between--I can only say between 1914, the beginning of the war, and the 1920s. Most of the things what we spoke about now were in this time.

WESCHLER: Now I wanted also to talk a bit about the relationship of the theater to the new government, to Eisner's government. Eisner had been a theater critic, so he had





a more than average interest in the theater.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, absolutely.

WESCHLER: Did he have any special relations with the directors or the writers?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, he was--of course, all the liberals were avant-garde, but he still admired the classics. In fact, the first celebration of the revolution was at the State Theatre; first they presented a play by Goethe called Epomenides Awakening. It was very classic and very boring but with great gestures--and then the curtains closed. When the curtain opened again, a little man came out between the curtain with a thin red beard and red hair and very pale, and everybody knew, of course, it was Eisner. He said--he lisped because he was very shy also--he said, "We are socialists and we are the democrats." That's what I remember. That was his belief also, but the others didn't believe in him. I mean his adversaries didn't believe that.

WESCHLER: Did he have any special meetings of drama people?

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, he asked for a meeting and asked my husband [to attend]. There was also Gustav Landauer at the meeting, who was called the minister of culture then, of schools and culture--the name was Kultusminister. Kultus is more religion, but in this way, it was more culture. Brecht was asked to attend, and Georg Kaiser, who was then also very modern, a playwright with a great success. There



was Steinrück, who was the great actor who came also from Reinhardt and became the general director of the State Theatre. He was a very good general director and also a wonderful actor. Georg Kaiser said, "We should change entirely the whole program of plays--no more classics and all this old stuff." Eisner asked him, "What would you propose?" Then he said, "More Georg Kaiser."

[laughter]

WESCHLER: What was the result of this meeting?

FEUCHTWANGER: There was no real result, because how could you in such a short time make a difference? But afterwards, Steinrück, who knew all those people and the modern writers--he had a very good program. The other theaters didn't follow anyway what the government said. They were more modern and more avant-garde. But at least there was a new wind in the State Theatre.

WESCHLER: So that now it would be the State Theatre and the Kammerspiele which were both presenting more modern....

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, but still there was no competition between the two, because the State Theatre was a big, very big theater; it was the opera house also at the same time. And they couldn't play these intimate plays which were more the kind of Kammerspiele. That means "chamber," you know: that is, a smaller room. Ibsen and the conversation plays, as they were called then, and



Strindberg all demanded smaller theaters. So, on the contrary, they kind of helped each other out with the actors sometimes, when it was possible.

WESCHLER: Okay. Was Landauer also one of the people who was killed?

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, he was slain by the soldiers of the White Guard when the government of Berlin sent the Reichswehr to beat down the Räteregierung. They arrested everybody and also Gustav Landauer. Gustav Landauer was a great idealist and thought when he speaks with people he could change people. He believed that. He was a tall man with a big blond beard, a dark blond beard, and spectacles. And he didn't look out of the spectacles; he looked more inside, I had the feeling. He was not a realist. He didn't see how life really is; he thought people can be changed very fast by the revolution. So he tried to speak with the soldiers and to persuade them that now we have another time, that we shouldn't be any more militaristic and no more making wars (because there was still the hate against France on account of the Versailles Treaty). And then the soldiers--they wanted to go home and it was just boring to hear this man always preaching--they took the butts of their rifles and killed him. Beat his head in. It was on the way to the jail.

WESCHLER: You had some other stories about the collapse.



First of all, about the Right after Eisner's assassination.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, I have to tell you that: after Eisner's assassination, it was also very remarkable. The whole people were very much for him in the beginning, and even the reactionary people. For instance in our house, the mother-in-law of the general whose apartment we rented, she came to us and she said, "We are so glad about this Eisner; he seems such a very good man, and he brings new air and everything. We were lied to: our king lied to us; the kaiser lied to us. They always spoke about victory, and all of a sudden, one day the war was lost. We didn't know anything. So we have to have new air." But the same people who, when he rode through the town, acclaimed him, when his funeral was, they acclaimed that he was now dead. They didn't acclaim him; but they acclaimed his murderer.

WESCHLER: When that happened, then began the Räteregierung and that too put several people in danger, and many came to your house.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, during the Räteregierung, those were suspected, of course, who had titles like the Count Coudenhove-Kalergi. He had founded the Pan-European movement, and he was married with a famous actress [Ida Roland].

WESCHLER: You might talk a little bit about him. Who was he? What was his background?





FEUCHTWANGER: His father was ambassador to Japan. His father was half Hungarian, half Dutch--Coudenhove is Dutch and Kalergi is Hungarian--and he was a count. He was ambassador in Japan and married a Japanese princess. The son was [Richard] Coudenhove-Kalergi, and he looked wonderful, beautiful: this mixture of Hungarian and Japanese was very interesting. Also his wife was a beautiful woman, of course. They came and searched his room in a very good hotel where he lived and they found....

WESCHLER: This was during the Soviet period?

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, during the Soviet period. They looked who was there in the hotels and found his name as a count; so he was suspected. They looked into his room and found a book with the title Communism. They took it in hand, and he said, "But this is for communism." So they let him alone. But he didn't want to stretch his luck, so he left the hotel with his wife, and they came to us. They didn't know where to go, so they came to our house. At the same time came the wife of the ministerialrat [Mrs. von Kramer], who was the father-in-law of our general, and she came to our apartment because she wanted to be protected. And another ministerial officer came to our house, and then Coudenhove-Kalergi, and I think somebody who was more to the left. I think Kaufmann, this lawyer who owned the Kammerspiele and was also a very intimate friend of Eisner's. They all



came to our house. There were all kinds of political interests. Also the funny thing was that several days later we were invited at the house of the brother of my husband who didn't live far away, also in Schwabing, and he had another clan in his house. There were for all kind of different political directions. One of the ministers of the former Räteregierung was there.

WESCHLER: Which brother was it?

FEUCHTWANGER: The second, Ludwig. [pause in tape]

WESCHLER: We were just mentioning the other people who were at Ludwig's house during this period.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, there was a famous philosopher whose father had had an affair with a Feuchtwanger, a cousin or something like that of Lion, and had had to marry her; he converted to Judaism, and the son became a famous philosopher [Max Scheler]. He was there. Then there was [Johannes?] Klingelhöfer, who was minister of health and things like that. What would you call it?--health, welfare and agriculture. He was the son of peasants, and looked like Jesus with a blond beard and blue eyes. Then there was the son of the attorney general from Bavaria who was a famous poet.

WESCHLER: What was his name?

FEUCHTWANGER: His name was Johannes R. Becher, and he wrote very modern lyrics in those days which nobody could understand.



Ecrasite was the title of one of the first. He became later the minister of culture in East Germany and helped Brecht form the Berliner Ensemble. They knew each other from those days.

WESCHLER: So, during that period, the Feuchtwanger family was protecting a whole group of people.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, that's true. There were other people who I forgot, but they all were involved in liberal politics. But the only real communist was this man who was a peasant's son and was agricultural minister. The others were not real communists in those days. Surely not Max Scheler, the Catholic.

WESCHLER: And what did they have to fear exactly? Who would get them?

FEUCHTWANGER: It was the White Guard, the Reichswehr, who were sent from Berlin to put down the Räteregierung. It was very bloody; if they had found them they would all have died like Gustav Landauer. They didn't even make a trial; they just killed them with the butt of the rifle. I remember the day after Landauer was killed, there was a girl who was the friend of an architect, and he gave a big party. We were invited, but I couldn't come; I don't remember why. My husband was there, and he said he met a man there who introduced himself as a captain from the army and said, "You know, I was very angry with my people, my soldiers, who



killed Gustav Landauer. I told them beforehand, 'Don't have to do anything with intellectuals because the day afterwards, we only have trouble with the newspapers.'"

WESCHLER: Well, these are obviously extremely turbulent times.

FEUCHTWANGER: They really were, ja.

WESCHLER: And all through our discussions here, on the outskirts of these times, has been the figure of Bertolt Brecht. We've kept on deferring talking about him directly, but perhaps now is the time.

FEUCHTWANGER: He was still so young, so very young, there; he was about twenty, I think. He told us that in Augsburg, where he came from, they made also the revolution. He was in the army, but he was not healthy enough, so he was a sanitary worker in the hospitals. His friends were all on the front. When they came back, they all took horses somewhere and rode through the city and shouted and shot with their guns, and that was their revolution. [laughter] And then he came to Munich to do a little more revolution.

WESCHLER: Well, why don't we start at the beginning with Brecht. How did you meet him?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, that was very funny. One day, somebody called my husband.

WESCHLER: What year is this now?

FEUCHTWANGER: Nineteen-eighteen or so--it was after the





revolution in Augsburg when he came to Munich. I have written it down somewhere. It was '18 or '19. He was studying medicine in Munich. And he went into the Café Stephanie, which was the café of the Schwabing, of the Bohemians, where everybody was there--those who were arrived already and were famous, like Wedekind, or those who didn't have anything and were usually just sitting there with one coffee the whole day, one cup of coffee, and could read all the newspapers they wanted. If they couldn't pay that cup of coffee, it was all right, too; some other friend paid for it or so. Everybody came there, and everybody knew each other. So Brecht, who knew about this café, coffee house, went and saw a famous actor with the name of Arnold Marlé. (He played a lot of Strindberg and Wedekind.) He went up to him and said, "Mr. Marlé, I know you are an actor. I have written a play. Could you tell me what I should do with it?" And Marlé told him--he had the newspaper before his face and didn't even look up--"Go to Feuchtwanger." So Brecht went to the telephone and called my husband and said, "Mr. Marlé told me to call you, that you would help me. I have written a play." So my husband said, "Please come and bring it to me." So he shouted through the telephone and said, "Yes, but I wanted to tell you, right away, I wrote this play just to make money. It's not a good play." So anyway my husband wondered, "What about the other play?" He said, "Yes, the



other play is much better." So my husband said, "[Next time] bring the other play, too. In two days, you will call me. I will have read the play, and I will tell you what I think about it." So after two days, he called, and my husband said, "Why did you lie to me? That's a very good play."

WESCHLER: Which play is the one that he wrote?

FEUCHTWANGER: It was called Spartacus. My husband said, "I have spoken about your play with the director of the Kammerspiele, Otto Falckenberg. He will come to me, and we could meet each other because he is interested in the play. He hasn't read it yet, but until you come he will have read it, and then we can speak about whether the performance will be possible." So they met each other, and Falckenberg said, "I am very interested in the play and would love to perform it, but this title is impossible. There is that terror group in Berlin who committed all kind of crimes--at least, that's what they say--and if I play it here, they would burn down my theater. We have to have another title." So we were all sitting together, and I had a brainstorm. I said, "How about Drums in the Night [Trommeln in der Nacht]?" They liked this title and adopted it.

WESCHLER: So you are the author of the title of Drums in the Night.

FEUCHTWANGER: The author of the title. That's not very much. [laughter]



WESCHLER: What was Brecht like in those very first days?

FEUCHTWANGER: He was very shy, but you know the shy people are not always so shy inside. My husband was shy, too, [laughter] so I knew what the shy people are. Anyway he was very grateful what my husband did for him. Also he has been played and was successful, but not outstandingly successful; but the play provoked a lot of interest. And this interest has also been heard of in Berlin. I think there were critics about him in the Berlin newspapers.

Later he brought Baal, and my husband said, "Yes, it's true, you are right. This is a better play than Spartacus. But it cannot be played, of course; it's impossible. In the times we are in, that's impossible to be played. Even if there is no censure anymore." Brecht was not astonished about that.

But he insisted that my husband would write a play with him. He said, "I would like to make a play which has already been established in England. Maybe we could find something which is not known so much, and we could adapt it together." My husband looked at Marlowe's plays, and found this Edward II, and proposed it to Brecht, if he would like to do that. He was very enthusiastic about the idea, and they made a new kind of Edward II.

WESCHLER: Did Brecht know of Marlowe beforehand, or was...?

FEUCHTWANGER: I don't think so. He was too young still. During the war, he hadn't much time to read much English. And also Marlowe was not very much known--only Shakespeare.



WESCHLER: It was only known to someone like Lion who read everything.

FEUCHTWANGER: No, he did it only because Brecht asked him. Also, of course, Marlowe was known to my husband, but he didn't think about this play right away; he had to read it again. Then they adapted this play, and it has been performed the first time in Munich in the Kammerspiele, and this was a great sensation. They came from everywhere, all the directors came from all the big towns and cities in Germany. Also from Berlin came, from the State Theatre, the almighty [Leopold] Jessner, (who also lived here [in Los Angeles] and died here later). He came; he was the greatest theater man in those days.

And then, after the premiere, they all came to our house. Of course, nobody had anything to eat; everybody brought something to drink. I had a little--by chance--some ham and bread and butter, that was all. But everybody came. First we all ate in a restaurant, and we heard, from the other side--there were, you know, those partitions between the tables--we heard from the other ones, "Do you also go to the Feuchtwangers' afterwards?" [laughter] The street was already full of people when we came home. They came with taxis. There was one man who had a bakery, a very fine bakery, and he brought all kinds of baked things to eat; so he was invited, too--he was let in, too.





Finally there were so many people that I said, "That's all what is necessary now." So, when all those people were there, and I opened the door again there was a man said, "I'm the prince of Coburg-Gotha." This royal prince was also a theater fan; he owned the theater in Coburg and he was very much for modern plays. So when everyone was there, I finally said, "The only man who now is lacking, is Jhering." The bell rings, I opened the door, and Jhering came in. They were great enemies, Jessner and Jhering. [laughter]

It was very wild, finally, the party, and some drank a little too much. Also a friend and playwright, Arnolt Bronnen, was there. He wrote Vatermord, you know, Assassination of the Father; that was one of the plays in those days which had to be seen. He was there, and also a friend of Brecht, Caspar Neher, who made the sets always for Brecht--and very beautiful sets he made. Bronnen said something about Brecht, and Caspar Neher--they were all friends, you know--thought it was something critical about Brecht. He had drunk too much, and he wasn't used to that. He took a bottle of wine and wanted to beat the head in of Bronnen. When I saw that, I threw myself between the two. Since Caspar Neher was such a big man, and even I couldn't be strong enough to do anything, so I just turned his nose up. I thought that would help, and it did. But the wine came



all down my neck and into my--I had a very low neckline, and it all came inside. I had a black velvet dress, so it didn't do any harm; it could be washed and cleaned out. Anyway, I was full of wine--but only on the outside. [laughter] But at least I saved Bronnen's life. Then a girl took her clothes off, and all kinds of things happened.

WESCHLER: This was all the celebration of Edward II.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, celebration, ja. [laughter] And something else happened. I didn't tell you about that. I told you about Valentin, you know, the comic.

WESCHLER: I wanted to ask you in more detail about him.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, that comes; there is more to say. There is another one, who was called [Joachim] Ringelnatz. Ringelnatz was a sailor once and a teacher of grammar school. So he was not a very cultured man; he was more or less like a proletarian. He was also at that Simplicissimus where Valentin performed. He always made himself very comical verses which were not comical--they only sounded comical; he didn't mean them to be comical. But they were great things, you know; wonderful Ringelnatz was a personality. He always made with his finger, set it into his temples as if he bore his finger into his temple and took those verses out of the head. It was great, really fantastic, like Christian Morgenstern, if you ever heard about him, a little bit like that. And very grotesque. Anyway, when in the morning I had to clean up--I



had no maid in those times (sometimes you could [afford] help and sometimes you couldn't)--fortunately I had taken out the big carpet, the big rug, but there was still everything, cigarette butts and everything. But when I began to sweep, I came to a corner, and there was coiled a man, and this was Ringelnatz. (Ringel means "roll," you know; that's a funny thing.) But he didn't do it intentionally. He just had drank too much and fell asleep. He was like a sailor's knot himself, lying in a corner sleeping. That was the last of the events of this night. [laughter]

WESCHLER: Did everyone have an appropriate hangover, I should hope?

FEUCHTWANGER: I don't know, I haven't asked them; but they were used to it usually.

WESCHLER: But there was a great deal of partying of that kind in the whole Bohemian community.

FEUCHTWANGER: Yes, there was nothing else to do. There was no television, and either you went to the theater which was not expensive--and many of these people in the Bohème, they got free tickets, either from the authors or the actors or so--[either that or....] So there was nothing else but partying.

WESCHLER: Well, let's talk a little bit about Karl Valentin. He is another person who is extremely influential on Brecht.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, he was. And Brecht even made a movie with him.\*

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\*Mrs. Feuchtwanger's notes continue that the film had no name and was never shown then.



WESCHLER: Well, why don't you just start and tell us who he was.

FEUCHTWANGER: It's very difficult. There have been written books about him, but nobody can find out what really could make him what he really was. He was long and thin and had a very thin, pointed nose; he had a little artificial nose when he performed which was even more pointed, but he wouldn't have needed it. He was very thin and looked like tuberculosis, you know, like the impersonation of tuberculosis. His wife, who played with him, always played as a man, as a conductor or something like that, and very, very, fat. She wasn't fat, but she played somebody very fat. He usually didn't play alone; he had always this partner. It was very funny. You can't tell really if you just quote him. For instance, she asked him, "You have glasses on, but you have no glass in it."

WESCHLER: "There's no glass in your glasses."

FEUCHTWANGER: So he takes them off and looks at them a long time; he looks at them and says, "Yes, it's true. Aber, but I thought it's better than nothing." [laughter] So it's [difficult to communicate], this kind of humor he had. Then during the Nazi time--he was, of course, very much against the Nazis, but he had to perform to make his living--he was popular with the people and he was popular with the intelligentsia. And one of his evenings, he said, "Yesterday,





I passed the Cafe Luitpold"--that is a very elegant, rich house--"and there was a beautiful car, a Mercedes Benz, standing before the house; and out came a Nazi and left with the car...." So he was called to court, to a Nazi court, and they said, "How can you do that, say that there was a very rich and elegant car and then a Nazi drove it! It doesn't make a good impression. We warn you, if you continue like that, we close your theater, and you can't perform anymore or even you go to jail." So the next day he went again on the stage and said, "Yesterday I passed the Cafe Luitpold and there was a beautiful car, a Mercedes Benz, and out of the coffee house came no Nazi." So it was, of course, worse, but they couldn't do anything. He was too popular; they couldn't forbid him. They just looked the other way. So that is one of his characteristics.

WESCHLER: And what was his impact on Brecht?

FEUCHTWANGER: Oh, he influenced Brecht. Brecht wrote a little one-act play which was called The Wedding, I think, where everything breaks down, and those things like that Valentin also made. He played also some instruments, Valentin did, and Brecht once played in his orchestra, the flute or something. [laughter] It's very difficult to make him out. I don't know. What would you think, what is your impression now after I've told you? Can you see him? Do you have a feeling?



WESCHLER: It's very much tied to this cabaret style.

FEUCHTWANGER: It was in the cabaret, ja, ja.

WESCHLER: So I incorporate it with all the images I have of cabaret life.

FEUCHTWANGER: Ja, ja. But before, in the beginning, he was only in little restaurants--pubs, I could say. He played only for the people, for the proletariat. But some of those clan, the Schwabing clan, like Lotte Pritzel, saw him and said to Kathi Kobus, who was the owner of the Simplicissimus--that was the Bohemian cabaret and restaurant at the same time, more or less a wine restaurant--they said, "You have to let him perform." This was just a little thing; it was long like a stocking. And there he played and people were so enthusiastic with him that later on the Simplicissimus became a little bigger. But he was never something which anybody would know about except those who were in the know about it. He had this very--he had his following there.

WESCHLER: Were there many people like him, comedians in cabarets? Was that a common vocation?

FEUCHTWANGER: No, not at all. Just before that there was one which was called the Eleven Hangmen--Die Elf Scharfrichter--those who hang people. That was before my time. Wedekind founded it; when he was very poor, it was the only living they had. Also Thomas Mann was then with Wedekind. He wrote something for him, for this



cabaret. It was called eleven because there were eleven people....

Roda Roda was also a famous man, who was the master of the anecdote. He wrote the best anecdotes. He also once wrote about my husband for an anecdote. In Berlin, when my husband learned how to drive a car, he said, "Now, Feuchtwanger...."

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